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# THE NAVAL HERITAGE



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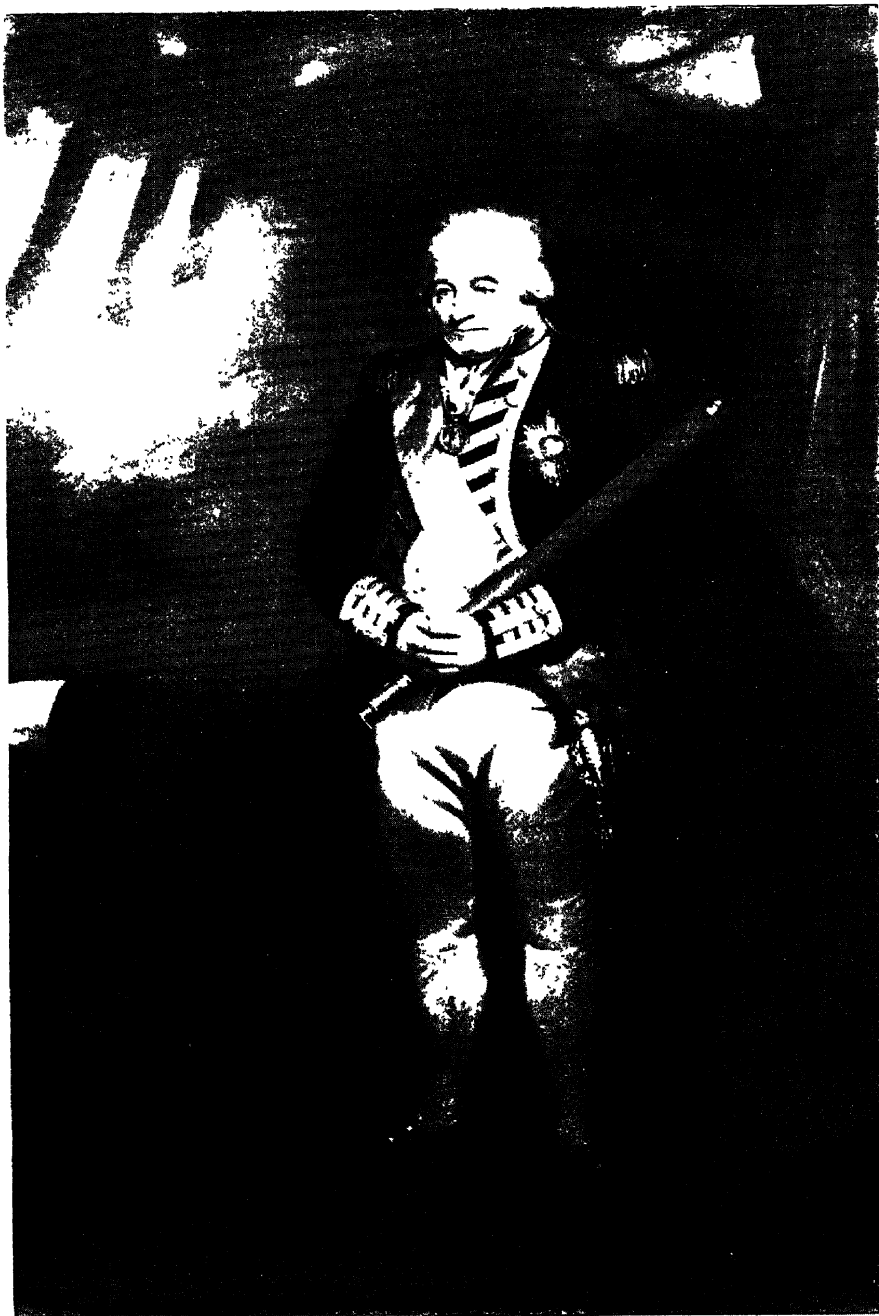
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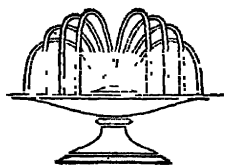




JOHN, FIRST EARL OF ST. VINCENT  
*after J. Hoppner*

# THE NAVAL HERITAGE

*by*  
DAVID MATHEW



*Collins*

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1944

THIS BOOK IS SET IN FONTANA, A NEW TYPE FACE DESIGNED  
FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE HOUSE OF COLLINS, AND  
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TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
ST. VINCENT TERM,  
1915

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## *Preface*

THIS BOOK is dedicated to those who began their naval careers at the Royal Naval College, Osborne, in September, 1915. These pages at least bear witness to the keen interest aroused by the teaching of Sir Geoffrey Callender and his colleagues. This study of the development of the naval life has involved some attempt to re-create the effect of the impact of naval tradition upon the general English scene. The simplest method of suggesting the atmosphere, the mental background and the episodes of peace and war would appear to be to concentrate on certain key occasions. By examining such passages in detail one can obtain a mass of information focused upon a single point. In the first part of the book this plan is followed.

The impression of Francis Drake in the Pacific, the study of Robert Blake, the eye-witness accounts of Solebay fight and the voyage to evacuate Tangier as seen by Pepys are all examples of a picture of naval life in process of evolution. They represent successive stages in the building up of those traditional values of the Royal Navy which may be thought to have achieved their final form in the high eighteenth century. Thereafter the life was altered and the thought was modified; but the spirit of the Royal Navy, the corporate sense and deep tradition was now fixed.

The second portion of the volume represents an effort to trace the development of the naval life and also the inter-action between the Navy, now established in its central position, and the general life of England. A survey of the Hanoverian Navy thus leads on to a series of studies which are still presented as swift episodes; Kempenfelt and Lord Sandwich's position; Rodney and Hood in the West Indies; the influence and legend of Howe, Nelson and St. Vincent; the conception of the frigate action as seen by Broke; the classic feud of Gambier and Cochrane.

In a general survey one can hardly escape discussing familiar tracts of naval history, but there are angles from which they may be seen in a new light. In the chapters dealing with the nineteenth century information is collected as to the way in which the changes from sail to steam affected the naval life. Naturally a study of so

vast a subject can only follow out a few lines of discussion. The framework of the naval administration is not examined, nor are those detailed variations in ship design described in Mr. Carr Laughton's "Ship figureheads and sterns." Similarly to describe the different changes in naval ranks would involve going over the ground already covered in the volume by Professor Lewis.

I should wish to express my gratitude to Mr. L. Carr Laughton and the staff of the Admiralty Library for their constant help, to Sir Geoffrey Callender and the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum for permission to reproduce paintings in their charge, and to the Council of the Navy Records Society for permission to quote extracts from the volumes published by them. I wish to express my thanks to Commodore A. W. S. Agar, V.C., D.S.O., R.N., for the use of papers relating to the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, to Commander H. L. M. Cary, R.N., for providing information as to Lord St. Vincent's association with Torre Abbey, to the Countess of Gainsborough for permission to use manuscript notes relating to Trafalgar and some of Lord Barham's MSS now preserved at Exton Park, and to Lord St. Levan for permission to use the Townshend MSS at St. Michael's Mount.

I must express my thanks to Milton Waldman for assistance and advice, and I am grateful to Admiral Sir W. E. Goodenough, G.C.B., and Captain Russell Grenfell, R.N., for their part in discussions on the subject of this book although they are in no way responsible for my opinions. The whole book bears the traces of the judgment of my brother Gervase.

DAVID MATHEW.

LONDON, *May* 1944.

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## Introduction

THE NAVAL TRADITION has been for centuries a crucial factor in the life of England. It is in some ways remarkable that so massive an inheritance could have developed with such slowness and irregularity. The officers first embarked for single voyages and then, at most, for one commission. The professional element was slow in growing. For long the King's Service on the sea remained only one form of military duty which on completion might constitute a claim to some civilian employment or some captaincy ashore. There was a Navy long before there was a Navy List.

As far as the seamen were concerned, there was no contract lasting longer than a ship's commission and no security of re-employment until just before the Crimean war. For these reasons the Navy can be said to have been built up round the naval ports and not *vice versa*. It is difficult to exaggerate the part played by Chatham and Portsmouth and Plymouth in the building up of the naval life. These were the dockyard towns in which the seamen congregated and to which men came or were "pressed." They lived by and fed the Navy: it was to their narrow teeming alleys that the seamen returned.

The dockyard towns have this clear significance in English naval history because it was at these ports that the ships commissioned and here that they were paid off on their return to harbour. They were established to control the approaches to the Channel, to confront our French opponent and to defend the entrance to the London river. They were important military fortresses before the King developed his power upon the sea. The dockyards and the royal ships were but one element of the King's Grace's marine forces. Over all vessels he possessed that indirect remote control which mediæval theory gave. For these reasons there was always the closest contact between the royal and merchant navies. The navigators of royal ships came from merchant vessels and returned to them. The principle of the Royal Naval Reserve, in itself a Victorian creation designed to utilise the merchant service officers and men in time of war, is deep-rooted in all naval theory.

Yet a distinctive way of life founded upon discipline soon came to mark the Royal Navy. This book attempts to trace each stage in its development, the habits, the element of authority, the type of ship, the cabin accommodation, the life of wardroom and gunroom, the constant contacts with the life ashore. Very slowly there emerges that naval type in habits of thought, action and expression which may be said to have reached to its perfection in Nelson's day. The mass of naval correspondence enables us to build up a series of very detailed vivid pictures in which the naval life is set against the background of the day-to-day round ashore. One can thus see old customs in the making and the set of each succeeding prejudice. The ideas of ship construction and the tactical use of fleets can be traced as they appear in a community where professional thought grew very gradually but held tenaciously to its few principles.

Inevitably the life of the naval officer is much more accessible to study than that of the seaman. It is difficult to determine when an actual type had been evolved; but by the early Georgian period the sea officer was a well-defined and respected English character. His humours were already recognisable and he had a more pronounced disregard for foreigners than was usual even in Sir Robert Walpole's England. A sentiment of loyalty to the Crown and of veneration for the person of the Sovereign was developed in Nelson and his captains to a degree which was rare among their shore-going contemporaries. Above all the officer class had an almost fanatical detestation for the Revolution.

On the other hand the influence which the possession of a body of professional knowledge exercised on both officers and men in separating them from their landsmen friends cannot be neglected. It is also of some interest to fix the beginning of the romantic appeal of the naval life for the general public. This can, perhaps, be placed at about 1759, the year of the production of "Hearts of Oak" which followed upon Hawke's and Boscawen's victories.

It is probably upon the economic plane that the life of the seaman can best be approached. Thus the pay and circumstances of those serving in the fishing fleets or of the wherry-men who plied on the Thames for hire were intimately linked with conditions at sea in the King's ships. Again a study of the working of the Newcastle colliers in the seventeenth century has an immediate bearing on the naval seaman's lot. The carefree character of the seafaring world made constant interchanges simple. It was, as ever, war which swept

the merchant seaman for a time into the Royal Navy. In a measure this easy contact likewise applied to junior officers. The mates of merchant vessels would find themselves as naval quartermasters. The early military officers on shipboard had close links with those who sought employment in the King's land forces. At every point the naval life must be referred to the society ashore from which it sprang.

It is a difficulty that the study of naval history has hitherto been undertaken so unevenly. There are certain periods, the years between 1714 and 1740, for example, on which much work must still be done before any definite results can be attained. Above all, naval history has hitherto been approached either from the angle of the study of the material or from that of the development of campaigns along the lines of Corbett and Mahan. In general naval biography has been confined to studies of leading admirals which are strictly professional in their approach. The politico-social background of great flag officers has not been studied, nor has their relationship with their naval contemporaries. The autobiography and the informal memoir are hardly met with before the period of the war of American Independence. Yet from the time of Charles I onwards there is a whole corpus of letters relating solely to life afloat. The sea has a satisfaction for the leisured letter writer. It is for this reason that the simplest way to examine the English naval heritage is by developing a series of detailed pictures which will throw light on many facets of the ever-changing naval scene.

The Royal Navy has played a part in the making of English history which is almost without parallel in the maritime development of other nations. Once an island power is brought within the stream of world events her naval forces must play a dominant rôle in offensive and defensive action. In the case of Japan there were long centuries of withdrawal from all contact with the foreigner; but from the time of the fall of the Shogunate and the establishment of the power of the Emperor Meiji in 1869 the naval strength has been decisive. It was this new instrument of naval force which brought about the defeat of the Chinese at the battle of the Yalu River in 1894 and the victories of the war against Russia some ten years later. The defeat of Admiral Rodjestvensky at the battle of Tsushima in 1905 was the destruction of a fleet which carried no invading army and harboured no project of invasion. It was an action against a hostile force which had ventured into the waters

of the Sea of Japan. The culminating act of Japanese sea power was the skilfully planned and executed attack upon Pearl Harbour. The external history of Japan is in fact inseparable from the development and threat and use of the Imperial Japanese Navy and the naval air force which is its satellite. Since the development of the nation state the English military position has depended primarily upon sea power.

At the same time there have been various factors in this development of English sea power which have set the English fleets apart from those of other nations. Something of the unplanned and unforced growth of the English oak is seen reflected in naval history. The vital centuries which followed on the emergence of the nation state at the close of the Middle Ages were marked in England by a strong opposition to taxation which led inevitably to a disinclination to prepare for war. The Royal Navy has expanded in each war time and declined with each peace. There has been no centralised monarchy to maintain it at strength. Time and again it has been cut to the bone by strong parsimonious administration in London. It is this matter which makes it so difficult to speak of any continuous naval policy.

Still if the English naval policy has been slow in its growth and fluctuating and discontinuous, the life of the seaman has stamped itself upon the nation's consciousness. Since the reign of Elizabeth, at any rate, the sailor and not the soldier has been the typical English fighting man. For centuries one could not conceive of France without the martial spirit of the French Army at its core, nor of England without the Royal Navy.

Two consequences followed from this intimate association. The close connection of the life of the seaman and junior officer with that of their contemporaries ashore has been already noted. It was of equal importance that the personnel of the high command depended directly upon the Government in power. Only in the Navy of the United Provinces can one find a parallel for this immediate, civilian control of naval officers. Yet the Netherlands could maintain their maritime position for only the period of a century. During fully three hundred years the English naval command and high administration reflected immediately each phase of political domination. It was just because it was so supremely important that the Navy was so closely shackled.

At the same time these two elements had their corresponding

influence on life ashore. It seems reasonable to state that at least from the Restoration period the landsman was continuously seized by the figure of the seaman as an integral and necessary element in the English scene. Again certain characteristics of naval command, which will be considered later, left a permanent impression on those successive, small and privileged groupings which for so long controlled the government of England.

The whole subject of naval administration still awaits its historian. The admirable and suggestive study by the late Mr. M. Oppenheim only covers the period between 1509 and 1660, and the collections which he had made for a second volume were lost when the Southampton Public Library was destroyed in one of the air raids on that town. Speaking generally it was not so much a question of the naval administration becoming entangled with politics as of the service developments following upon each vicissitude of the royal administration. The Navy developed from an almost private concern of the sovereign to an immediate dependence upon a secretary of state. A centralised monarchy might have developed the power of the lord high admiral, and the Duke of Buckingham's rôle in that great office during the early years of Charles I gives an impression of a form of authoritarian rule which the English governing class was soon to make impossible. In fact, as in all oligarchies, the control became vested in committees and the Board of Admiralty, among whose members the office of lord high admiral was held in commission, was in turn dependent on that great committee which was in time to be the Cabinet. Thus, but less successfully, did the Grand Signiory of Venice conduct the naval affairs of the Serene Republic.

It followed that naval practice must wait upon political development and it was the Revolution of 1688 with the Whig ascendancy which it engendered that brought about that committee rule, the close-bound accord within its own high *coterie*, that marked the naval appointments and instructions far into the eighteenth century. It is, however, worth noting that in the greatest of all periods of naval history, which was ushered in by Boscawen and Hawke and closed by Collingwood and Nelson, political feuds become progressively less acrid. The greater the unity in the politically conscious section of a nation the calmer will be the atmosphere among those few officers upon whom there falls the exercise of high command. The fundamental postulates of naval officers in the Nelson period were very

similar. We are left only with the fret and clash of personality which is inseparable from all great affairs.

The direct political intervention could lead occasionally even in time of war to the recall of flag officers in high command by administrations hostile to them. The superseding of Admiral Rodney after his victory in the battle of the Saints' Passage is, perhaps, the most notable example. Until the mid-Victorian period the Naval Lords resigned when the first Lord of the Admiralty went out of office on the fall of the government. Only very gradually was the position reached in which serving officers of flag rank were not required to affirm their political affiliations. At times it was the naval side which showed the animus. A whole group of admirals refused to accept commands at the hands of the fourth Earl of Sandwich on account of their opposition to him.

In general the naval character appeals to the conservative and rural voter. It is to this section of the public that the various efforts to increase or to maintain the Navy have been addressed. Lord Charles Beresford's career in politics is a case in point. Free as are retired naval officers in modern times, it is in general within the Conservative Party that they struggle to create opinion on behalf of naval needs. On the other hand the seaman's approach to the political arena would usually lie through the Trade Union wing of the Labour Party. In this respect Stoker W. J. Edwards, elected for Whitechapel in 1942, may prove a forerunner.

The effect of public opinion upon naval development is inevitably a fairly recent growth. The immense expansion of the Navy during the Napoleonic wars was sanctioned by popular approval; but it was only with the extension of the franchise and the growth of literacy that any direct argument in naval matters could be sustained. A limited and influential section of opinion supported Captain Cowper Coles's demand for an armoured turret ship in the middle 'sixties, but it is not until the naval scare of 1885 that direct popular interest in construction can be traced. Henceforward this interest was to be powerful, intermittent, uninstructed and closely linked with press campaigns. It could only express itself in terms of *quantity*. The agitation in regard to the construction of "Dreadnoughts" in order to outbid the German naval programme is the best-known instance. The cry "we want eight and we won't wait" indicates at once its widespread appeal and its logical weakness. It is worth noting that in dealing with the House of Commons, which is

its master, the Service possesses only one weapon, the threat or fact of the joint resignation of the Sea Lords. Viewed from this angle the signature of the Washington and later Treaties, which so gravely reduced the Navy in 1922 and succeeding years, represented a series of missed opportunities. It was, however, not until the Hanoverian period that a body of naval opinion was formed which would find itself in accord or at variance with the national policy. Such agreement and conflict could not be focused until the Navy Estimates were laid before Parliament in the eighteenth century.

Naturally this body of service opinion could not form itself until the type of sea officer had stabilised. No sense of solidarity tempered the jealousies among the captains who had obtained commands in the Ship Money fleets which were commissioned for each summer during the last peaceful years before the outbreak of the Civil War. It is true that the Tangier Diary of Samuel Pepys, written some forty years later, reports a series of judgments common to the naval officers of his day; but these are, if one can so express it, judgments on nautical rather than naval matters. When they are strictly naval in their bearing, they deal with service custom and not with policy. The ships in commission were few at any time in the reign of Charles II. It was surely ordered and graded promotion with prospect of continuous service for long periods that was required to create that *cadre* of officers which alone would be strong enough to give rise to a continuing judgment on policy as well as custom.

The term post-rank dates from the late seventeenth century, but the idea of the post captain as an officer in command of a ship of a certain rate only became established with the first of the great increases in the Navy which can be traced to the sea aspect of the war of Austrian Succession. There was a real dividing line between the captains and the lieutenants from among whom they were recruited. There was no doubt as to the status or the isolation. From the mid-eighteenth century therefore there existed a definite naval rank among whose members there was a complete equality mitigated only by seniority. It was surely the post captains, much more than the few admirals, who formed opinion on all service matters. No other Navy possessed a rank which separated those who attained it so completely from their juniors. The French *capitaine de vaisseau*, pursued as he was by the *capitaine de frégate*, was no equivalent. The captain was the pivot of all naval discipline.

At the same time this was a rank which could be reached early



in life during the periods of naval conflict. Thus in the Seven Years' war, which broke out in 1756, many captains were needed for the new ships pouring from the dockyards and for the captured vessels. Keppel was nineteen, Howe and Cornwallis were twenty and Rodney was twenty-three when they became post-captains. When the Peace of Paris was signed in 1763 the captains' list, which by then included the Hoods, Hughes, Duncan, Hotham, the elder Hyde Parker and Jervis, provided a very fair cross section of the experience, professional skill and fighting spirit of the Royal Navy. One comes back again to Quiberon Bay as the moment at which the Navy reached a power which it was not to lose.

The first group of names suggests the influence of the great Whig houses. Still service interest, which first came in with the great eighteenth century fleets, was a factor just as important as political or social backing. The naval families like the Haddocks and the Martins and the Staffordshire and Suffolk Parkers could do as much for their sons and *protégés* as any landsman. The disposal of the commands of vessels carrying post-rank involved the exercise of those frank politics of the ante-chamber to which the Georgian epoch leaned. Friendship, interest and alliance shot by the clearest enmity first bound the *cadre* of officers together, nor has the Royal Navy ever lost this good cement.

From about the middle of the eighteenth century the life of the senior naval officer was governed by considerations of promotion and half-pay. On attaining post-rank each officer was bound to work slowly up the captains' list before he could become an admiral. This process normally lasted for some twenty to twenty-five years, the greater part of his time being passed ashore without employment. No analysis has yet been attempted of the general financial standing or the usual expenditure of naval captains. In such a study the incidence of prize-money would find its place.

When on half-pay captains, with rare exceptions, lived in the country, A few came regularly to London since they sat in the House of Commons, usually as placemen representing seaport boroughs. The great majority had some form of interest, though frequently amateur, in farming. They rode and shot. This way of life separated them sharply from the masters and first lieutenants.

The lieutenants can be divided into those young officers who were moving towards post-rank and elder men who had no such ambition. These latter and the masters were close akin to the officers

in the East India Company's service and to those commanding the larger merchantmen. In peace they gravitated back to these services, each war-time drawing them again towards the Royal Navy.

The number of officers was strictly dependent upon the ship-building and ship-purchasing programme. From one angle the development of the Navy can be studied by considering the varying number of vessels building, laid up or in commission, the last-named needing crews. The officers were obtained from the merchant service and from those boys who had received a place in the midshipmen's berth as a consequence of some "interest" in naval circles. The ships' companies, who were only signed on for one commission, were composed partly of volunteers and partly of "pressed" merchant seamen and "pressed" landsmen.

The "press gang," which was principally active in time of war, can be looked upon as a rough and ready method of conscription. It had not the impartiality of the "lot" which decided military service in France under the Empire, and it was chiefly designed to bring into the Navy men who had experience of the sea but who preferred the merchant service pay and freer discipline. Only those landsmen who lived near or ventured into the harbourside districts of seaport towns went in serious danger of the "press gang."

Public sentiment in Queen Victoria's reign rendered the continuance of this system impossible. It is remarkable that the general civilian opinion only operated in regard to the Navy along humanitarian lines. Thus the demand for the substitution of punishment in cell for the rare floggings came from the voter. The public were concerned with mercy rather than with justice; no civilian opinion ever formed itself in regard to the inequalities or insufficiency of naval pay, neither in 1797 nor in 1931.

An important factor in the building up of the naval life was the late introduction of any pensions system. The Paymaster of the Navy's department for a long time only envisaged payment in respect of present or future service. Half-pay was a factor for more than a century before retired pay for officers was introduced. The conception of retired rank did not emerge till 1786 with the creation of the so-called Yellow Admirals, captains promoted to rear admiral on retirement. As far as the Lower Deck was concerned, continuous service was not introduced until 1853 so that pensions for chief petty officers are of very recent date.

In this connection it is difficult to exaggerate the *rôle* of the naval towns and of the smaller fishing ports in absorbing the naval seaman who had completed his term of service. Here were whole communities to which the sailor could return after that following of the sea which was an hereditary calling. The wounded, too, could find their place there. Inland the maimed sailor, the wooden-legged mariner of tradition, was apt to fall into the clutches of the old Poor Law system.

In these matters the outlook of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries were poles apart. During the Georgian period the civilian enthusiasm for the Navy was characteristic of times of war. By the middle of the reign of Queen Victoria the Navy was equally popular with the English people in war or peace, with a popularity which was as undiscerning as it was legendary and unfailing. This certainly owed something to the Coastguard system which had done much to provide for the middle age of the long-service seaman. There was of course a special nexus between the Navy and that great Victorian public which created the English watering places and the custom of annual holidays by the sea. The men in the iron and steel industries, except in so far as these were situated on the coastline, had no contact with the life on board the ships they helped to build.

In the eighteenth century none of the people of the Midlands and very few of the town dwellers had ever seen a line-of-battle ship. The naval ports, apart from Plymouth which was a centre for county society, were visited on business and not for pleasure. In the ground swell of Victorian prosperity it was very different. The vast London population crowded the pleasure steamers, whose paddles went churning in the August weather past the naval vessels anchored at the Nore. Now, too, there came to the English mind, to the mind of the great new middle class, these swift and everyday impressions; the white-painted coastguard stations; the weather reports along the coasts of England; ships working out of Spithead past the chequer of the forts; the Channel fleet steaming in line ahead; the mild sunlight on black upperworks and yellow funnels; the sound of the Marine band across the water playing "A Life on the Ocean Wave" or "Hearts of Oak." This was the age of the naval correspondent, still in chrysalis, and the first beginning of manœuvres.

This is, perhaps, the place to indicate very briefly the part played in the development of the Navy by tactical and strategical considerations. In regard to tactics the more modern landmarks were

the institution of annual manœuvres in 1885 and the first introduction of steam tactics into the Mediterranean fleet by Admiral Sir William Fanshawe Martin in 1860. As far as the sailing fleet was concerned the period prior to the issue of the Fighting Instructions in 1731 is most obscure. It would seem that tactical exercises designed to implement the principles of the Fighting Instructions were carried out, but any systematic training developed very gradually and depended upon the energy, initiative or indolence of the flag officer in question. The whole matter of tactical exercises in peacetime in the eighteenth century fleets is one that awaits further research.

The many single ship actions during this period do not appear to have been preceded by preliminary exercises carried out by British frigates. In this connection the development of gunnery practice in frigates cruising independently does not seem to have become usual until the later stages of the Napoleonic wars. Captain Broke's target practice in the *Shannon*, while patrolling in northern waters and off the coast of France between 1808 and 1812, is noted as something exceptional. Naturally the advantages possessed by a seasoned ship's company, who had served together for the greater part of a commission, were recognised from much earlier times; but these advantages appear to have been related rather to seamanship than to gunnery.

The strategic uses of the Royal Navy certainly conditioned its development to a marked degree. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of naval policy in this wider sphere is the rôle which from the days of Blake had been assigned to English sea power in the Mediterranean. The commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean fleet was to come in the eighteenth century to enjoy a position of influence both in regard to British diplomats and to the Courts of the Italian peninsula for which it is difficult to find a parallel in the history of any other Navy. This is all the more remarkable because, although Gibraltar was taken in 1704, the British Crown had no possessions in the Mediterranean proper until the capture of Malta in 1799, except for the transient occupation of Minorca. This great naval influence developed partly from the need to protect British trade, and in particular such long-standing interests as the English factory at Leghorn, and partly from a lavish conception of an imperial-diplomatic rôle which was to be the more humdrum English counter to the *Roi Soleil*. The protection of the trade route to India did not

operate as a factor in Mediterranean sea power until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

It seems likely that the importance of the Mediterranean station under its second aspect was in great part a consequence of the feud between the Courts of Paris and Vienna which became intense at the outbreak of the war of Spanish Succession in 1700 and remained acute until the years immediately preceding the marriage of Louis XVI and the Archduchess Marie Antoinette which took place in 1770. In this period, largely on account of the possession of the electorate of Hanover by the House of Brunswick, Great Britain was involved in every major European conflict and the Italian peninsula was a barometer the movements of whose quicksilver reflected each French or Austrian preponderance. Later, and especially in the years before and after the battle of the Nile, Great Britain assumed the burden of the responsibility for the opposition to the designs of Paris in Italy which then carried with them the extension of the Revolution. On such a train of history depended Sir Horatio Nelson's vivid policy.

Throughout the nineteenth century the possession of Malta and Gibraltar with the great fleets based on them implied that power of discriminatory blockade which has always been a weapon in the armoury of British policy. This was shown during Garibaldi's crossing first to Sicily and then into Calabria, which brought about united Italy, and again in the Spanish civil war of 1936.

At the same time this British naval preoccupation with the Mediterranean, which has now endured continuously for three hundred years, did not involve the power to hold that sea throughout each war. Jervis was obliged to abandon the Mediterranean in 1796 and the British position was most difficult in 1940-42. Nevertheless each war ended with British naval supremacy enforced and the Mediterranean fleet remained throughout the most potent instrument of British foreign policy in Southern Europe and the Levant. In its general scope and in the detail of its peace-time manifestation this power was probably never more impressive than during those years between 1890 and 1902 when the Marquis of Salisbury was both prime minister and foreign secretary.

The use of Malta as a great base had a double effect upon the naval life for it gave an experience of foreign countries which was both detailed and very narrow. The Navy became familiar with that southern climate and with all the sport that could be found in every

shore of the Mediterranean. On the other hand for generation after generation both officers and men were insulated from the foreign way of life, the thought, ideas and languages. With swift speech and gesticulation all about them the Navy stood aloof. The decks were holystoned and the brass work shining. The hard light fell upon the awnings and on the ships' companies in their white drill.

Such distant bases were to become the experience of all major navies when once Far Eastern waters were opened to the commerce of Europe and the United States and to the protecting warships of the Powers. The commander-in-chief of the China station, especially from the late 'eighties onwards, shared some of the proconsular attributes of the C. in C. in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the China squadron is of minor significance in naval history. It lasted for a relatively short period. It presupposed a Navy in Japan which, if powerful, should be friendly. The squadron was composed of vessels which could deal with the warships maintained in Far Eastern waters by rival European navies. The events at the beginning of the war of 1914-18 and von Spee's use of the *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* make this purpose clear. Once the Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1902 had lapsed, the squadron's functions changed their character. The Pacific thenceforward required to be treated as a whole and as a sphere of Anglo-American naval co-operation.

The other remote stations which have played their part in naval history, and notably the West Indies, were established for the purpose of police work in peace-time and for colony protection in time of war. They were reinforced as occasion served. The West Indian station in particular was decimated time and again by fever. In peace-time it is difficult to trace their considered uses. In the case of the North American and Australian stations the weak squadrons were reserved for a great destiny. The Royal Canadian and Royal Australian Navies were built up from their bases. Throughout the quiet years of the nineteenth century the British Colonial harbours served as the points of departure and arrival for those long cruises in which the smaller naval units "showed the flag" until Lord Fisher's changes re-grouped the fleets and sent the older vessels to the scrapheap.

In home waters the chief change which the Fisher policy brought was the creation of the base at Rosyth and the re-orientation of naval power to meet the German menace. The great fleet anchorage at Scapa was still undefended at the outbreak of the war of 1914-18

and it was left for the second German conflict to extend the pivot of naval action to the line between Iceland and the Orkneys. But in general naval life was less affected than one might imagine by this new concentration on the German enemy. Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth remained the naval depots and the ports where major vessels were commissioned and paid off. The old commands of the Nore, Portsmouth and Plymouth retained their prestige and predominance. The development of the steam mercantile marine in the nineteenth century, drawing so heavily upon the dockside populations of Clyde and Mersey, only served to underline the naval character of the great southern ports.

It is not easy to determine the reasons that have led to the development of merchant service and naval traditions in different centres of population. All the seafaring world contributes to the naval defence in time of war and the towns like Grimsby, which have a large proportion of trawler and drifter crews among their seamen, perhaps contribute most. The fishermen form the backbone of the minesweeper and naval trawler crews. This preponderance in the smaller vessels was even more marked in the old wars. A statement made in the House of Commons by Admiral Sir Charles Saunders in 1774 on the introduction of a proposal to cede fishing rights off Newfoundland puts one aspect of the question very clearly. "Give up the fishery, you will lose your breed of seamen, and I know no way that the country has of breeding seamen but this one the fishery, and the other the coasting trade." It is a tumbling ill-constructed sentence, but the meaning could not be more plain.

In regard to naval recruitment in time of war there was one great change between the situation in the reign of George III and conditions in the present century. This was due to the rise of the yachtsman. Under the Hanoverians yachting had been a privileged, expensive pastime, the ancestor of Cowes week. The development of small boat sailing was something very different, the product of the scanty leisure of the professional and business class which had come forward in the Victorian industrial prosperity. Here one finds the roots of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as opposed to the R.N.R. which is firmly anchored in the merchant navy.

Familiarity with narrow waters was a mark of those who served in and commanded the motor launches of the first German war. The motor torpedo boats and motor gun boats of the present conflict are also largely manned through the R.N.V.R., but the very great

numbers entering the Navy since 1939 are drawn from those who have an affinity with rather than previous experience of the life at sea.

These considerations lead to the question of the specific qualities which can be ascribed to those who serve under the white ensign. The naval commanders must be treated separately and there are few characteristics, beyond loyalty and a bond of naval duty singularly enduring, which can be predicated of them all. In considering the general body of officers and men one is, perhaps, on surer ground. There is a power of unyielding endurance which is common to them and a capacity for initiative which cannot be checked except by supine leadership. The impress of naval discipline is constant. With this there goes the gifted and light-hearted understatement which is paralleled in no Navy in the world. A gay and equable spirit has been transmitted through many naval generations which have suffered long periods of retrenchment and have known many victories, some setbacks and reverses but no defeats. A peace of surrender has never been brought within the range of their imagination. A self-confidence arises from a determination on efficiency. A keen feeling for efficiency, seldom expressed but ever present, is very strong. This finds expression in a channelled, determined and careless simplicity and results throughout the Royal Navy in a clear capacity shown by the commanders of naval vessels when confronted by tasks which are unusual and hazardous. In time of war especially ships, often sailing independently, carry out their duties with a perfection which is imaginative and meticulous. Beneath it all there lies an easy self-reliance, a hatred of pomposity and of self-seeking, an intense desire for the much-broken family life, and very often a dislike of the sea. The whole of this amounts to an inborn hereditary capacity to sail and fight a warship.





## PART ONE

### P R E L U D E

#### *The Tudor Scene*

LATE in the evening with the moonlight lying on the water the *Golden Hind* came in with the landward breeze from the Pacific to the Peruvian harbour of Callao. These were the last days of January, 1579, and she had completed the most dangerous portion of her great voyage. Francis Drake was welcomed as she came to anchor. His reception had the dream-like quality which had pursued him all along the coast since he had first gone into the little Spanish port of Valparaiso.

In that southern harbour he had found the galleon *Los Reyes*. When Drake's vessel had been sighted, the Spanish crew had brought up a "botija" of wine to entertain the strange ship's company. Inevitably they believed that they were Spaniards. There were then only nine houses around the new stone quay and the settlement had a mediæval naming, Valparaiso, the valley of Paradise of so many monasteries. It had been dark when the *Golden Hind* had reached that harbour. Her approaches were best made at nightfall, and the crew of *Los Reyes* had beaten drums to welcome in their unknown comrades. The trade along that coast making northwards for the Isthmus of Panama was carried on exclusively in Spanish bottoms. They could not suspect the presence of an Englishman.

In each case there had come the shock; the numb surprise; the haul of booty. The same scene was to be re-enacted until April when Drake set out for the Philippines from a port in Guatemala. Since before Christmas the *Golden Hind* had been sailing northwards. Always she had outstripped not only authentic news but every rumour of her coming. She had tacked quietly into each unsuspecting haven. This was a supreme good fortune which could only come once in a generation. No other sea captain would ever reap again that golden harvest which Drake had gathered so swiftly and so mercifully.

Sir Francis Drake belonged to the High Renaissance in its English

setting. He had the unknown origins, the florid disciplined magnificence and the stern unbridled courage of the earth's great captains. Action, and action alone, could stir him on to oratory. "I have brought you,"<sup>1</sup> he told his men at Nombre de Dios, "to the mouth of the Treasure of the World." Visual images and a proud carriage meant very much to him. Writing never came easily and he read but slowly. The *Golden Hind*, her great cabin, her poop, her quarter-deck, this was the backcloth against which he played his own rare part. His self-confidence was that of a man who had risen solely by his merit. It is a mark of his capacity that he kept to the world he knew and did not play at politics.

It does not appear that up to this time he had had much contact with those who had financed the present venture, the Queen of England and the Earl of Leicester. The dating on the portrait at Buckland Abbey would make Drake thirty-eight or -nine this year; there does not seem much substance in the theories which make him younger. He was short and somewhat stocky; the scar from the arrow wound was hardly visible; the face beneath the ruddy beard a little full. Above all he was set.

England and Spain were still at peace. He knew that he would be hanged if captured; but he also knew that if he sailed into Plymouth Sound with his new cargo his name was made. Already his holds were full of gold and silver, porcelain and silks and ropes of pearls and jewellery. He had a golden falcon with an emerald at its breast and a great processional crucifix which was studded with emeralds as big as pigeon's eggs. His men were lynx-eyed when it came to searching with speed beneath that southern sun for precious metal.

He had in these perfect months the assurance of a leader who has his ascendancy and must and will maintain it. There were, it would seem, two sides to Francis Drake. On the one hand he was infinitely skilful, intuitive, courageous, severely practical and realist. He belonged to his century in that he was as swift to suspect enmity as he was slow to unmask it. On the other hand his surging and pictorial imagination found full play. He had none of the sophistication of the courtiers; he was shrewd and West Country. Nevertheless it was with a vitality so fierce as to be crude that he worked out the lineaments of the Renaissance hero, "the magnificent man."

There is surely a fundamental simplicity in his happy life which

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Francis Drake Revived*, p. 16.

has none of the labyrinthine quality of Sir Walter Raleigh's. He maintained state as he sailed along the coasts of Mexico. As he knelt on the embroidered cushion to lead the ship's company at their psalms his chaplain would set out the altar cloth and the fine silver plate that had been taken at Valparaiso from the chapel by the quay. His captives of rank would taste of the general's hospitality. The accounts that have come down to us from the captured Spaniards are meticulous, the trumpeters sounding the dinner hour, the viols playing, young John Drake kneeling for the "lavabo" as he poured the perfumed waters on his master's hands. The silver plate was set about the table with gilded metal garlands weaving round the arms of Drake of Ash and the globe with the North Star upon it. The General would ask advice gravely and keep his counsel while the pages stood motionless behind his chair. At times he would display the Queen's Commission, a touch of theatre.

There is no doubt that Francis Drake possessed the acquisitive and retentive memory and the brazen apt illusion of that period in which dress and phrase and gesture were never softened. He was quick to quote the textbooks of the art of war. "If Hannibal had followed his victories he had never been taken by Scipio." It was the fact that he was a "new man," so completely the architect of his own fortune, that gave him such a relish for the phrase of pomp and dignity. After the surrender of *La Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion* he stood on his quarterdeck in armour to receive her captain, Juan de Anton. "Accept,"<sup>1</sup> he said to the Spaniard gravely, "with patience what is the usage of war."

In those sunlit waters the *Golden Hind* sailed forward to her captures, her gunners at their stations and her archers ready. She had a broadside of nine guns, in all eighteen cannon, five iron and thirteen bronze. The use of this armament can be studied in the account of the taking of Juan de Anton's galleon off Punta Galera on the coast of what is now Ecuador. The Spaniard's mizzen mast crashed overboard being hit near its base by chain shot from the cannon. A combination of shot and arrows then prevented an effort to repair the damage. Drake's mind was occupied with navigation and the art of war. He carried in his great cabin an English and a French text-book for navigators as well as a volume dealing with Magellan's voyage which is thought to be the account by Antonio Pigafetta.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Examination of Juan de Anton, 17th March, 1579.

His ship had been careened at Port St. Julian before she sailed past Cape Virgins and entered Magellan's Strait. Before leaving Plymouth she had been pitched and stripped over her bottom seams with lead. She was built on a French pattern, a good sailer, watertight with a following wind but apt to leak in high seas when she had to labour sailing on the wind with her bowlines hauled.

Certainly at this stage of his career Drake belonged to the merchant navy. He was the owner of his vessel; he had no connexion with the royal ships. He had gathered together his ship's company on the strength of his personal reputation. Still in this voyage of circumnavigation he was in a real sense the precursor of centuries of naval effort, that maintenance by force of arms of the rights of the English flag. The account of Drake's struggles can be read side by side with the account of Commodore Anson's expedition when he took the *Centurion* around the world in 1740. It is true that in 1579 war against Spain was not declared; but, much more truly than Hawkins, Drake was the father of all prize money.

What his age required was not the feudal chivalrous inter-related effort, it was rather the individualist; the solitary conqueror; the Alexander. This rôle no Spanish officer would yet accord him. "It is a thing that terrifies me," wrote Don Miguel de Eraso di Aguilar, General of the land forces of the Indies, "the voyage and the boldness of this low man, the son of vile parents, for it is said that his father was a shoemaker. Yet it is a positive and accomplished fact that he undertook that navigation." Drake sat in his great cabin colouring the charts of the Indies. His young nephew stood by to assist him, for both loved to paint. They designed and painted in birds and heraldic animals and figures. The boy had earned the golden chain promised to the look-out who had first sighted the treasure galleon from the masthead. Upon his head the captain wore his scarlet and gold-braided cap of ceremony. His arms were there tricked out, "argent, a wyvern gules." A sentry stood outside the cabin door. None of the ship's company could forget he was their General.

Drake's good fortune had come with the changing of his ship's name from the *Pelican* to the *Golden Hind* in honour of the armorial device of Sir Christopher Hatton, a favourite courtier. The change was made just before they left the Atlantic and after that grim misery at Port St. Julian when John Doughty, one of his officers, had been beheaded after court martial on a charge of attempting to

raise a mutiny. The memory of that time was behind him. It was only necessity, real or fancied necessity, which rendered Drake inexorable. Still this whole conception was very far from that of earlier days.

One detail from a catastrophe will emphasise his point of view. The *Marigold*, the smallest of his ships, had foundered in a heavy sea in the high latitudes in the waters to the southward of Cape Deseado. His surviving companion the *Elizabeth* (Captain John Wynter) lost contact with him and eventually went home east-about through the Magellan Straits. Drake named the anchorage where they had last been in company the Bay of the Severing of Friends.

The use of this expression is an instance of his liking for a phrase which is magnanimous, high-sounding, rather grand. It would illuminate his unexampled fame, his host of followers. For his own men he cared greatly. No English sea captain before his time gave such rigorous attention to his crew's health. But since his childhood days on the farm at Crowndale in Tavistock parish it seems Drake had few equals: perhaps he did not feel the need of them.

He had been brought up in a strict school. His life must have been hard with his father when the latter was Bible Reader to the ships at Gillingham and harder still when he lost his readership in Queen Mary's time. It was this early training which placed Drake, with Sir Humphrey Gilbert, at the head of those seamen who were borne forward on the Reformation tide. "So trim the Book," his father had written<sup>1</sup> on leaving the family Bible to his youngest son, "and keep in bosom and feed upon it."

In all this matter of religion Drake's reserve only emphasises the banked and hidden fires. On the table in his great cabin lay Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* in which he conned his modern history. This was where his beliefs lay and what he fed upon. A curious interchange is recorded between the General and the Archpriest of Guatalco who had inquired about this volume. "It is," said Drake, "a very good book. Look at it. You will see here those who were martyred in Castile." He would pore over the woodcuts.

In the early autumn of 1580 Drake returned home to Plymouth. He was the first Englishman to have sailed round the world and indeed the first leader to have completed a voyage of circumnavigation, for Magellan had been killed on the homeward journey. The following April his ship was brought round to Deptford and in that

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Corbett, *Drake and the Tudor Navy*, i, p. 70.

well remembered scene he was knighted on her quarterdeck by Queen Elizabeth.

Sir Francis Drake presents a strange isolated picture and one that has bitten almost too deeply into English legend. He is so settled in the nation's memory that it is simplest to begin with his great voyage and then to examine what he stood for in the development of the Tudor Navy.

Political events and notably the war with Spain and the Spanish Armada focused attention on naval matters, but it was as part of the age-long struggle between the English and French Crowns that sea power was considered in the Middle Ages. At that period the fighting in the Channel had been very casual, ships loaded with archers bearing down upon the enemy anchored and lashed together in a harbour entrance as in the engagement at Sluys in 1340. Piracy was understood: it was endemic, not dangerous. With piracy there went, too, privateering. Letters of marque giving authorisation to a private vessel to plunder alien trade had been issued as far back as the thirteenth century. On the English side it was the duty of the barons of the Cinque Ports to police the Channel and check these activities.

In time of war there were occasional military raids against the enemy's coastal towns. In contrast there was no real threat of continuous fleet action in the Narrow Seas. Such engagements as took place were always an overflow from or prelude to real land campaigning.

The coming of the Renaissance world and the development of the nation state brought among many other consequences that union of France and Brittany which had such a profound effect on the sea rivalry. The absorption of the Breton duchy into the neighbouring kingdom was long maturing and came about slowly in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. The sovereignty was merged into the French Crown when that Queen of France who had been Duchess of Brittany in her own right died in 1514.

For three and a half centuries the Breton duchy had been a neutral or a battlefield in the struggles between the Kings of France and England. Calais was in the hands of an English garrison and at the beginning of the Tudor period only the harbours from Cape Gris Nez westward to the Marches of Brittany were directly controlled from Paris. The coast known to Englishmen as the Trade, which lay about Ushant, and all that run of fishing ports and

villages from Brest, past Roscoff, St. Pol de Léon, St. Brieuc and St. Malo, almost as far east as the rock of Mont St. Michel-in-peril-of-the-sea, belonged to the Breton dukes. It was this union of France and Brittany which laid the foundation of French naval power and constituted the permanent threat to any control by England of the Narrow Seas and the western approaches.

The sixteenth century in fact witnessed a series of Anglo-French conflicts which were to prove much more characteristic of later wars than those episodes in the struggle with Spain which would seem so spectacular.

It is true that the element of land fighting upon the sea still persisted, but there were also present many of the seeds of naval warfare. Boarding and the use of pikes and close in-fighting were among the marks of that first obscure campaign of 1512-13 which included the battle of Conquet. It had several points of lasting interest. There were to be difficulties in provisioning the English force. There was a rudimentary cutting-out expedition; a duel between large ships; some vague foreshadowing of sailing tactics. The scene of operations was the entrance to Brest, a fortress harbour which was to prove a recurrent factor throughout English naval history. The time of the year, for there were two cruises, was August and April. The weather held that combination of fresh breezes with the long Atlantic swell which was regarded as favourable off Ushant.

So much had by now developed and it was still thirty years before Drake was born. On the other hand the naval incidents in this campaign seem to have occurred almost by accident. The general scheme was that described by Admiral Colomb as "cross-ravaging"; landing; burning works or homesteads; destroying ships in harbour. In the only engagement of the first year the principal hostile vessel was at anchor. The conception of disputing the command of the open seas had not been reached.

A few points are worth making about the organisation of the ships. These were either royal men-of-war or ships owned privately. As they came home from these cruises they were discharged and the hired vessels delivered to their owners. There is some reason to suppose that the armed companies aboard them often came from the same regions as the ships. Thus Sir George Trevanion, the head of the old Cornish family of that name, commanded the soldiers in the *George of Falmouth* and Sir Edward Cobham led Kentishmen in the



*Barbara of Grenwyche*. The places mentioned would seem to have implied what we, in modern times, would call a port of registry.

Under the King the final authority in time of war was vested in the lord high admiral, a great officer of state. This high post came as a political reward and did not necessarily entail the least experience of the sea. At the time when Henry VIII began to reign neither the then lord high admiral the Earl of Oxford nor his deputy Sir John Paston had seen sea service. In these years the admiralty was considered principally as an affair of dues and profits. Licences were granted and paid for to enable the fishing fleets to leave for Iceland; orders were sent to the ports to apprehend escaping rebels. There was no concern with ships or shipbuilding. There was a static right of licence, wreck and foreshore.

In this connection the voyages of discovery antedated all modern naval organisation. For ocean navigation these were the crucial years. The Cape of Good Hope was first rounded, Columbus made his voyages, Cabot reached Newfoundland and the coasts of Labrador, and Vasco da Gama sailed to Calicut, while Oxford sat as lord high admiral in his high seat at Castle Hedingham.

The fact that Oxford's successor, Sir Edward Howard, was killed at the battle of Conquet when boarding a French galley is only one of the marks of the great change which was gradually leading to the création and maintenance of a royal navy.

It was part of the strength of the position which Drake shared with all Elizabethan seamen that they came to manhood after a time of progress and entered immediately into its fruits. Throughout the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there had been constant changes<sup>1</sup> in the art of shipbuilding and ship repair. It was really the new vessels which had required a new personnel rather than *vice versa*. The Henrician reigns mark an era of consolidation. They are a necessary prelude to the great achievements.

As early as 1496 there had been built at Portsmouth the first dry dock in England, a construction of timber walls backed by stone placed close to the site of the present King's Stairs. Labour had come from all over England. Portsmouth was convenient for the New Forest, and wood was cheap and plentiful. In Bere Forest there was oak timber as well as beech and ash. There were already some regular building slips for men-of-war like those at Smalhithe on Reding Creek. The great size to which vessels had now attained

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Administration of the Royal Navy, 1509-1660*, by M. Oppenheim, pp. 45-99.

was notable; the measurements of the *Henry Grace à Dieu* work out at one thousand tons.

This ship had topsails and topgallant sails on her first three masts and a topsail on the bonaventure mizzen. The mizzen topsails were lateens like the sails below them. The *Henry Grace à Dieu* carried twenty-one heavy brass guns, one hundred and thirty iron guns and one hundred hand guns; she was pierced with gunports for broad-side fire. Cast-iron guns now came from English foundries. Salt-petre was imported, while gunpowder was made at home.

The reign of Henry VIII also witnessed the establishment of Woolwich and the formation of Deptford. These docks, together with that of Portsmouth, were capable of taking warships of five hundred tons burthen. The principal anchorages were Spithead and "Gillingham Water." This was Portsmouth and the Nore in germ.

The earlier practice of hiring warships, to which Henry VII had been much addicted, passed away. Vessels were at first purchased abroad, especially from the Hanse Towns and the Genoese Republic; Ragusan ships, "argosies," sometimes came into the market. Even in these early days the Spanish navigation laws forbade the sale of ships abroad by Spanish owners. There was a steady background of manufacture. In this connection cordage was frequently made in England, while an Act of 1529 protected the cable and hawser industry associated with the Bridport district. Imported cables often came from Danzig. Oleron canvas was made in France; some Breton sailmakers settled down in the port of London.

The number of seamen required for the campaign of 1513 is given as two thousand eight hundred and eighty. This was exclusive of the victuallers which were normally hired English merchant vessels manned by their own crews. In 1545 it was estimated that five thousand men would be needed for the summer's fighting. Pay was at the rate of a shilling a week for shipkeepers in harbour and a shilling and three pence when on active service. The masters, who were in charge of the ship's navigation, received three shillings and four pence, the pursers and boatswains one shilling and eight pence. The similarity in the rate of pay for petty officers and men is very striking. Foreigners were found in the ship's companies and even occasionally among the officers. In 1546 a Spaniard was retained as captain of the *Galley Subtylle* and a Venetian as her master.

Some sort of uniform existed. Coats and jackets were supplied and in 1513 there is mention of six hundred and thirty-eight coats

of white and green cloth ordered for the fleet. At the same time there is reference to thirteen coats of white and green camlet, and four of satin, presumably for officers. It is often stated that the assignment of the crews to different stations in the ship dates from this time. In 1545 there occurs what is apparently the first reference to disease in English naval vessels. The plague in question seems to have been scurvy and dysentery.

Until 1550 there was no victualling department. Biscuits, beer, salt beef, and white and red herring were supplied in bulk. The pursers had an allowance for wood and candles. It was about the middle of the century that the age of discovery first produced its full effect. The changes in naval administration which now developed seem in fact to have been conditioned by the need for planning and provisioning for long voyages. These became more frequent after Elizabeth's accession. Two factors produced that maritime scene in which Drake moved, the oceanic voyage and Spain's position.

That close nexus between the royal and merchant navies now passed into another phase. The big royal ships became of value to the merchant houses and were sometimes hired by them for prolonged cruises. Thus in 1567 Hawkins and his backers hired the *Jesus of Lubeck* for that fatal voyage which ended at San Juan de Ulua. The precise nature of the influence of the great mercantile interests upon naval affairs remains to be worked out. There was certainly a mutual confidence and a constant interchange of plans, and upon the financial nexus thus created there depended the new type of Elizabethan sea captain.

Very naturally there was at this point a change in the status of those entrusted with the command of royal ships. Throughout the reign of Henry VIII there appear among the commanders a number of men of landowning stock connected with one another and with the Court. Such men were the predecessors of Grenville and Raleigh, but they had none of those dreams of wealth which gilded Elizabethan episodes. Quite simply they looked for promotion in the royal service. Their hopes were centred on the fount of honour, places at Court, estates and favour. They were men of the royal service which could be either military or civilian, and if military either on land or sea. In Drake's generation there would come those whose working life was spent either at sea or in marine administration, sometimes at the Crown's behest and sometimes on behalf of merchants. Finally there would emerge the *naval* officer.

The work of the dockyards, ship designing and supplying went forward with that strong impetus to ocean trade which marked the reign of Elizabeth. This had one immediate effect upon construction. The ships which sailed with Chancellor to Archangel in 1553 were the first whose hulls were sheathed. All the time the plans for voyages were extending; the capital embarked in such ventures was increasing; excitement mounted with the great fortunes.

These matters, the beginnings of the trade to Muscovy, the traffic from the Gold Coast in gold dust and slaves, the trading on those shores of Africa which were nominally under Portuguese control and the direct illicit sale of slaves to the Spanish settlements in South America, lie outside the scope of this present study. Still they provided the training, just as the Spanish policy gave the incentive, for Drake's achievement.

As the full rivalry of France could not materialise until the absorption of Brittany into the domains of the French monarchy, so too no real naval threat could come from across the Bay of Biscay until Aragon, Castile and Leon were united as the Crowns of Spain. Two dates mark this process and a further swift development. From 1516 Charles V ruled over the whole of Spain and in 1580 his son Philip II brought the kingdom of Portugal and the Portuguese dominions in the East Indies and Brazil and Africa within his power. This second factor has the clearest bearing on the nature of the brief period of Spanish sea power in European waters. A policy excluding foreign trade had been pursued in both Spain and Portugal. There now devolved upon King Philip, who already possessed a vast colonial empire in central and south America, the duty of protecting all these territories and their sea-borne traffic. Added to this the gold and silver mines of the New World were in Spain's possession. Given the development of English merchant shipping, a trade war between Spain and England became in time inevitable. In earlier English wars the naval element was subsidiary to the land fighting, but now for the first time long merchant voyages and privateering led on to operations between two royal fleets at sea.

It is perhaps the influence of the mercantile element which makes it clear that no corporate tradition was yet envisaged. The circumstances of the time threw up the *condottiere*, the individual leader.

In course of generations there would develop a great navy which would mould the officers and men belonging to her. Now it was the isolated captain who left his mark upon that growth of sea custom which would be tradition in embryo. In consequence the routine at sea reflected life ashore both closely and erratically. It was to be the same throughout the century that followed until the great body of officers and of service custom had formed that mould which is so recognisable in the Georgian fleet.

No man possessed more fully that *condottiere* quality which is at once adventurous and calculating than Francis Drake. Yet his voyages would have left him as a great mercenary leader, shrewd and popular, had the Spanish Armada not built his fame. He was the first sailor to become a character known throughout the length and breadth of England, the first to become what in the eighteenth century would be called a national hero. Before the voyage of circumnavigation with which this chapter opens he had sailed six times to the Spanish Main. He had landed at Nombre de Dios and had attacked the Spanish treasure train; he had burned Portobello; he had sacked Vera Cruz. His skill and his aggressive fighting spirit were quickly legendary.

There is an immediate contrast between such a leader and the leisurely haphazard fighting captains of the pre-oceanic period of naval warfare. In regard to Drake it may be said that his own great feats of seamanship had inspired him. He could carry out in a novel setting the precepts of the magnificent man of the Renaissance as these appealed to a sea adventurer who had swung on the rungs of his own talent into a class which was rising and now privileged. In the first voyage around the world there was combined the opportunity, the vaulting technical achievement and that element of glorious and pristine wonder.

The real significance of Francis Drake's career in the development of the naval tradition of his country arises from his practice as the captain of a warship. In many ways that great Elizabethan world, in which the royal and merchant navies intermingled and in which the Court played so strong a lead, was very far removed from those calm and enduring values which were to form the naval character. The most experienced seamen of that period, the Fenners and the Hudsons and the Frobishers, were the ancestors of the merchant captains and explorers rather than of the naval officers. Even the celebrated Sir John Hawkins, who in addition to his sea exploits was

the builder of the later Elizabethan warships, had little in common with a service which in its final form was to be completely divorced from private profit.

At the beginning of the Tudor period the command of ships was given to the King's officers who were not seamen. Now with the oceanic navy there came the predominance of those who were seamen but were not bound to the royal service. They were adventurers concerned with the wide new great opportunities; they made their own commercial loss and gain. The Royal Navy in its final form would be officered by men qualified in seamanship who gave their lives to the Crown's naval service which conferred status, offered no security of employment, provided but small remuneration, and was an honourable career in a great nation.

This is a reason for not delaying in this work over those twice-familiar Elizabethan episodes which made the average Englishman sea-conscious. It was Drake whose legend was enduring, a man whose every gesture was connected with the sea. By contrast Hawkins was the type of the superintendent, the contractor, the comptroller. The latter was at the core of those West Country families whose heads were at once merchants and sea captains. He was linked both by marriage and financial interest with the chief officials in that imperfect naval organisation which had been sketched out in King Henry's time.

The Hawkins alliance seem to have regarded Drake with understanding shot with jealousy. Twice in his life he had the chance to throw in his lot with them and marry into them; but he had chosen not to do so. When his first wife Mary Newman died, soon after his return from his great voyage, he had made a rather naïve fine marriage with Sir George Sydenham's child. We do not know by whom it was proposed to him. It is plain that he gave land for it including the manor he had lately bought at Buckland Monachorum. He refurbished Buckland Abbey; but he never received anything from the Sydenhams of Combe Sydenham, not even what he chiefly wanted, heirs. The data is curiously insufficient, and his domestic life is never shown to us. It is strange that we should have a less clear picture of Drake in England than that provided by his Spanish captives.

Each detail in the accounts of his voyage show that it was the adventurous Elizabethan courtiers towards whom Drake gravitated. At the head of this tradition stand Grenville and Raleigh. Sharing

with him the sense of vivid living and the mounting aggressive high-keyed fervour, their approach was in other respects in sharp contrast with Drake's self-reliant and tough realism. A brief view will indicate how very far removed were the Queen's courtiers, with their glancing minds and swift indiscipline, from any later naval world.

They were a close-knit privileged grouping, associated and related, wealthy and with access to great resources. Sir Richard Grenville and his cousin Raleigh, George Carew, Cumberland, the younger Essex had in their different ways the taste for maritime adventure. These men were for the most part supple; an elaborate brittle education marked them; they exercised a rapid sliding wit. They had a scenting questing sense of money, a keenness for the insurance markets, a political ambition which was so strong as to be lethal.

Elizabeth herself, with nothing of the lavish carefree character that marked some of her courtiers, had a sense of the High Renaissance freed from ethical conceptions, a high-tensioned performance, a feeling for drama that was inescapable. As she sat with her mercenary grandeur and her pride and that clear sceptical intelligence, there passed before her mind the ships, the globe, the profit and the outraged Spanish envoys. She loved at once the *coup de théâtre* and the labyrinth.

From the labyrinth Drake was remote. It is perhaps reasonable to suggest that he seems to have possessed a coloured Tudor variant of that strong and unreflecting loyalty which the eighteenth century admirals of the Hood-Nelson tradition would give to their own King. Francis Drake was swift to anger and most unyielding, a man of hard and sharp West Country character. Above all he was intransigent. No one in that subtle Court had this clear intransigence except the Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham.

His resolute avoidance of Court politics left Drake free for his sea duties. Very much can be traced to him. The determination that the gentlemen-volunteers and the mariners should "haul together" is most familiar. He saw, in a way that the Court lords could never see, the officers and ship's company as one unit. The conception of seeking out and attempting to destroy the enemy's main force was the fruit of his strategic insight. This he manifested in the attack on the Spanish fleet in Cadiz. Still we should beware of reading back our later knowledge into the solution of each urgent

problem as it pressed upon him. The long troubles with Spain were at last flaring into open war. Drake's phrase on the threat thus presented is ever-famous. "Prepare in England strongly, and most by sea. Stop him now and stop him ever." In the defeat of the Armada he had his own great share. More than any seaman of his century he was responsible for the emergence of two factors of crucial significance in naval history, the training and control of a ship's company and the true uses of a fleet.



## *The Navy of the Commonwealth*

THE DEFEAT of the Spanish Armada produced an unique effect upon the imagination of the English people. The notion of sea combat and of a sea deliverance was henceforward engraved upon their minds. The only comparable event in the national history was the consciousness of air combat and of the debt owed to fighter pilots in the summer and autumn of 1940. In both instances the nation in its daily habit was awakened suddenly to the vital consequences of the new dimension.

The Armada was without a sequel, an isolated phenomenon in English memory. The actions up the Channel, the fireships, the fight off Gravelines and the dispersal of the galleons driving northward appeared as a single and finished sequence. They were complete and glorious. The Englishmen saw with their mind's eye the Prince of Parma's forces in the Low Countries, the serried pavilions and the flags and all the Spanish soldiery, while out in the narrow waters King Philip's navy, which was to cover the invasion, drove northwards through that autumn sea. There had come to the English people that mounting and undiluted confidence which was to recur in times of peril. In a visual age, with the nation rendered tense by the beacons and the musters, the details of the defeat of the Armada were as literal as the Bible which men and women now heard read to them. This throws a light upon that celebrated sentence in which Drake gave the news to Walsingham.<sup>1</sup> "God grant you have a good eye to the Duke of Parma; for with the grace of God, if we live, I doubt not but ere it be long so to handle the matter with the Duke of Sidonia as he shall wish himself at St. Mary Port among his orange trees."

Two elements had a clear effect upon the Royal Navy, the victory over the Armada and the long duration of the war. Thus the period of conflict between 1588 and the Queen's own death fifteen years later drew the force together and gave an embryonic unity to the naval administration. The merchant ships used for war came under the direct control of royal officers. Both Drake and Hawkins were to die on voyages undertaken to attack the Queen's Grace's enemies.

<sup>1</sup> Cal. State Papers, Dom., 1581-90, p. 18.

The capture of such a vessel as the *Madre de Dios* gave a new meaning to prize money. The death of Sir Richard Grenville and the loss of the *Revenge* had that epic quality which the Victorian age found so enduring.

With each passing year the picture acquires a sharper outline and certain details will recall the atmosphere of that time. We read in Raleigh's orders<sup>1</sup> of the soldiers marching through the ship before the night watch was set to see that all fires had been put out and that no candle was burning in any cabin without a lantern. They tramped across the spaces between decks whence "trunckes and chests" had been removed to free the guns.

An account of the knowledge required of the ship's master can here be added. He must learn it is explained<sup>2</sup> in that careful verbiage "to know the age of the moon, to cast the tides; how many leagues answer to a degree; the prime, the golden number which was the finder out of the loadstone." By contrast one of Raleigh's observations on routine<sup>3</sup> sounds very modern. "There are many and great reasons why all His Majesty's Navy should not in such sort be penned up as they are in Rochester water, the difficulty being very great to bring them in at times of need through so many flats and sands."

This was the period of the building of the *Sovereign of the Seas*, which was laid down by Phineas Pett in 1635 and completed two years later. She had three tiers of ordnances and ten persons could stand upright in her great lanthorn. The lines "Upon the Great Ship"<sup>4</sup> hit off one aspect of the impression created by this vessel most exactly:

I meane the ship so lately built,  
Without, within so richly gilt;  
O never man saw rapier hilt  
Soe shine.

As Mr. Carr Laughton makes plain in his study of 'ship figureheads and sterns' "the strap design of lozenge and circle, and the gradual introduction of compartmenting . . . reaches its zenith in the *Sovereign of the Seas*." In this ship the three open galleries,

<sup>1</sup> Orders to Commanders, Raleigh's *Works*, pp. 682-3.

<sup>2</sup> Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson, iv, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Invention of Ships, Raleigh's *Works*, p. 340.

<sup>4</sup> Printed in *Naval Songs and Ballads*, Navy Records Society, p. 37.

which were a feature of the *Prince Royal* built in 1610, were now enclosed and the sternwork rose to a great height. Upon this was placed a mass of gilded carving which brings back Le Sueur's large-scale statuary. The delicate spirit of the Vandyck portraits might be reflected in the caryatids on some quarter gallery, but in general the gold leaf was laid expensively upon branching designs loaded with allegory. It is worth noting that this was in intention an epoch of strict discipline.

In the Navy this time is slack water between the Elizabethan and Cromwellian action. A new ceremoniousness was creeping in. It was the great period of the saluting of the flag in the home waters and it was, perhaps, in keeping with this conception that royal ships were so often used to transport ambassadors across the Channel or to the Sound. Charles I himself had a certain general interest in the practice of shipbuilding and an æsthetic appreciation of the scroll work and the carving of the royal vessels. He had, too, a high keen sense of his regality in the Narrow Seas.

Always there were the characteristics of an age of pomp and carefree and mercurial spending. "A captain must have orders to forbid lavish use of shooting for pleasure at the meeting of ships, passing by castles and banqueting aboard."<sup>1</sup> It was the coxswain's duty to choose a boat's crew "to be able and handsome men, well clothed and all in one livery."<sup>2</sup> The trumpeter stood by the gangway while the breeze ruffled the silk banner with the admiral's colours which hung from the tube of his silver trumpet.

Under the circumstances it is not surprising that the merchant captains viewed this elaborate life with some dislike. "No ships."<sup>3</sup> wrote Captain Stradling, a serving officer, to Sir Edward Nicholas in 1632, "(are) more stubborn and unwilling to give His Majesty's ships respect than our own merchants. They hate all gentlemen, especially such as serve His Majesty at sea."

These points have their importance. In the discussions in regard to the levying of the tax of Ship Money on inland counties there is an undercurrent of dislike for the naval world in the Parliamentary opposition to Charles I. The courtiers were linked in a measure with the royal ships and the King's taste was reflected in the fleet too closely for his opponents' liking. It could not be maintained that the casual pirates of these years were put down effectively.

<sup>1</sup> Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson, ii, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> State Papers, Dom., Charles I, vol. ccxxiii. 13.

Beneath the whole opposition lay a mood of scepticism as to the real need for the maintenance of a Navy in time of peace. The nation was on the eve of those sharp Civil wars which would introduce new levels of reality. The stage was set for Robert Blake.

Since the death of the great Elizabethans no officer had left a clear impress on the growing Navy until the coming of General Blake. When he took over the command, after the King had been defeated by the Army and the Parliament, he did not find a new instrument, but he put it to new uses under a new government. The eleven years which lay between the surrender of King Charles to the Army in 1647 and the death of Cromwell, the Lord Protector, in 1658, were to witness a military administration which was singularly stringent.

The dominant factor in this period was the first Dutch war, a struggle waged by England for the sea-borne carrying trade. It was maritime in all its operations, hard-fought and successful in its objective. Since the massacre of English merchants by the Dutch at Amboyna in the Netherlands East Indies in 1624, relations had deteriorated between the two countries.

This war, which broke out in 1652, was superimposed upon the conflict caused by the relatively trivial efforts of King Charles's nephew, Prince Rupert of the Palatinate, to operate with a Royalist squadron. This raiding had certain consequences of great importance. "It was," writes Sir Julian Corbett,<sup>1</sup> "the fitting out of Prince Rupert's squadron at Helvoetsluys and the encouragement which the new maritime war received from foreign powers that led directly to the appearance of England in the Mediterranean." In the first stage the English instituted an elementary blockade against Rupert's squadron and the Portuguese who sheltered them.

Since 1640 Portugal was once more an independent kingdom now under the House of Braganza. A consequence of this revolt from Spain was the opening of the Spanish ports to the war vessels of the English Parliament. The situation was built up episode by episode. Prince Rupert took refuge in Toulon and in 1651 a fresh squadron was sent from England to relieve the Parliament's ships, which kept him there.

The most significant development, however, occurred in the early

<sup>1</sup> Corbett, *England in the Mediterranean*, 1603-1713, i, p. 208.

winter of 1654 when the Protector's reprisals against France were still in progress. Lying in the Spanish harbour of Gibraltar Blake held the Straits for three weeks thus preventing the junction of the rudimentary Brest and Toulon squadrons. Corbett declares<sup>1</sup> that this action laid bare "the true significance of the Gibraltar defile." Thus strategic facts were stumbled upon by those who hardly looked for them.

The chief actions of the first Dutch war were in the North Sea and the Channel frequently taking the form of attacks on the Dutch warships which convoyed the merchant shipping out and home. The English fleet was used as an instrument of foreign policy by a government which bargained with its weapons. Expenditure on the Navy was untrammelled by considerations of a parliamentary veto. A great expansion of the Service and a certain regularity in paying wages were achieved by the practice of using capital as income.

Certainly Robert Blake was peculiarly adapted to play his own great part in such a period. This officer is surely the least known and the most imperfectly understood of the naval commanders of the first rank. He shares much of the obscurity that surrounds the early and private lives of the leaders of the Parliament. Blake came from Bridgwater near Pym's house at Cannington. He was a merchant by profession, an undergraduate at Wadham College perhaps almost by accident, a soldier by instinct and experience annealed by the western campaigns of the Civil wars. The extent of his knowledge of naval practice before his appointment as a General at Sea in 1649 is still largely a matter of conjecture. He was reserved and the commanders associated with him appear rather as loyal allies than as intimates. He has left no informal correspondence. His letters are almost without reference to women; there is merely a compliment to his colleagues' wives, to Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Disbrowe. He never married.

A convinced Republican, Blake was dominated by the idea of the "service of the Commonwealth" to which he gave his resolution and his dynamic energy. He was short and compact, hampered by bad health. There is some reason to suppose that he was worn out prematurely. He was only fifty-three when the first Dutch war opened in 1652.

His bearing, contrary to the general impression, was somewhat

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, i, p. 319.

stately. A description of the way in which he received forty volunteers who came out from Dover on the eve of the first action with the Dutch and were pledged in beer glasses of Malaga will make this clear. "Thomas Cogshall, the General's coxswain,"<sup>1</sup> so the account begins, "got passage (for me) in the General's barge, then ashore for fresh provisions, from Deal aboard the *Old James* off the South Foreland. While I was staying at the entering port on the larboard side, Lieutenant Adams was upon his duty to wait upon each captain from the General's cabin to the entering port. . . . I was the person actually filled the old Malaga to the General and volunteers." Gibson describes how he messed with the General's retinue "at the middle gun-deck table abaft the mainmast."

Blake's quality is manifest in the vivid detail of the engagements in February, 1653. "The 18th of this instant,"<sup>2</sup> so runs his report dispatched from the *Triumph* off the Isle of Wight, "about six in the morning we espied the Dutch fleet, between Portland and the Casquets, and consisting as we judged of about two hundred merchant ships and eighty men-of-war. We were some twenty-five sail together, the rest astern and much to leeward by reason of which we were engaged very long before the rest could come up to our relief. We fought the whole day till the evening parted us. We kept sight of them that night and the next morning we came up with them again (the wind being west, they steering up the Channel homewards) and continued fighting until the dark night parted us." So is described the first two days of the three days' battle.

The concluding passage describes the last phase of the same series of engagements.<sup>3</sup> "We continued still fighting with them until the dusk of the evening, by which time we were some three leagues and a half off Blackness (Gris Nez) in France, the wind at north-east, we steering directly for that point of land." Surely these sentences leave upon the mind the impression of a dogged endurance and great persistence in attack.

Other phrases in his writings will build up such knowledge as we can attain. The following note to Montagu,<sup>4</sup> his younger colleague, has something in it of Nelson and the great tradition. "This place (the Bay of Oeiras) is a prison to me, and all the comfort which I can

<sup>1</sup> Reminiscences of Richard Gibson printed in *The First Dutch War, 1652-4*, Navy Records Society, vol. i, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Robert Blake*, Navy Records Society, p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 9th February, 1657, *ibid.*, p. 381.

promise myself by my enlargement now at hand is to be with my charge." Again a comment<sup>1</sup> on the Royalist army before Worcester is illuminating. "He is at a stand not knowing where to go, and his forces mutinous in respect of the tedious marches." It was in Cascaes Roads that Blake wrote this sentence. "Our only comfort is that we have a God to lean upon, altho' we walk in darkness and have no light."

The admiral's character had a clear directness. His correspondence deals with practical matters and requests. "We desire a considerable quantity of paper and canvas for cartridges may be sent us."<sup>2</sup> "We hear not yet of the hammocks, nor of the wood and candles."<sup>3</sup> Such letters were often composed in the evening. It was characteristic of the writer to date them with the day and hour as he sat with General Monck in the great cabin of the *Resolution*. In the Mediterranean it was the supply of beverage wine for his ship's company that gave him pause. "Madeiras not being so fit for this use in regard to its sweetness."<sup>4</sup> It needed in Blake's judgment to be mixed with the "hard and sharp" wine of the Faro vineyards.

A certain simplicity of statement marked him. He had nothing of Monck's cumbersome epistolary piety and was very far in spirit from the canting phrase of some of his subordinates. "The Good Lord direct our Rulers,"<sup>5</sup> wrote Thomas Pointer from one of Blake's frigates, "that they be so many Joshuas and Calebs following the Lord fully."

There are some expressions which recur in Blake's correspondence and seem to be crucial to his outlook. "The fleet of the Parliament of the English Republic" is in this category. On the other hand it may seem that an element of constraint appears when it is necessary to address the Lord Protector in formal phrasing. "The Lord Almighty protect your Highness, and this your fleet." Perhaps it was not congenial to use such forms which had been given, and would once more be given, to the King alone. A word in this earlier letter sets out with unmarred confidence that God-protected realm for which Blake fought "the Commonwealth of England."

If these notes give an impression of the great commander's character some details will convey that naval scene in which many

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 26th February, 1651, *ibid*, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 28th June, 1653, *ibid*, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated 6th June, 1653, *ibid*, p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 372. <sup>5</sup> Appendix, *ibid*, p. 438.

eighteenth century elements were by now apparent. In the first place, while impressment had long been legal, the actual method of the press gang was by this time in use. Captain Hatsell, for instance,<sup>1</sup> declared his intention of making a general press in the town of Plymouth to supply the *Marmaduke* and *Sampson*.

Coming to the type of naval vessel, the term frigate was applied very widely although its connotation was not yet fixed. With the big shipbuilding programmes of these years the names of men-of-war begin to show a certain uniformity; whole groups of names emerge which would in time become traditional. The idea of vessels built together in different yards as a "class" can just be traced. In March, 1653, to give one example, a paper was presented<sup>2</sup> to the Admiralty Commissioners containing a list of names for five new frigates shortly to be launched. "The frigate at Portsmouth to be called the *Bristol*, that to be built by Captain Taylor the *Portland*, the great frigate at Deptford the *Essex*, the lesser frigate there the *Hampshire*, and the frigate building by Mr. Pett the *Newcastle*."

An impression of ships laid up in ordinary with skeleton crews can be obtained from Major Nehemiah Bourne's inquiry<sup>3</sup> into the loss of the *Fairfax* frigate. This ship was burned to the water's edge at Chatham through loose powder being fired through the fall of a candle in the powder room. It was found that no watch was kept, nor was there an officer on board at the time of the accident. Only fourteen men out of a crew of thirty were in the ship. Her sails and anchor were on shore.

Various changes in ship construction were adopted, and the powder mills at Enfield Lock were now set up. The Navy Commissioners at Portsmouth wrote<sup>4</sup> to London asking that seamen "coming up without cause" should be punished and pointing out that the dockyard was still twenty-five shipwrights short, "which is not a little loss, as many forecastles are wanted." In the same seaport town plans were made for establishing a hospital, and sickness is now seen as a problem. "Porchester Castle is good for situation,<sup>5</sup> air and water, but may cost much to repair as a new house."

This was a period of great fleets and a sober strategy based as far as the narrow waters were concerned on the maintenance and

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 21st March, 1653, State Papers, Dom., Commonwealth, vol. xxxiv, 44.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 16th March, 1653, *ibid.* vol. xxxiv, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Report dated 24th March, 1653, *ibid.* vol. xxxiv, 69.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 31st March, 1653, *ibid.* vol. xxxiv.

<sup>5</sup> Letter dated 21st March, 1653, *ibid.* vol. xxxiv, 46.



destruction of ocean convoys. The admirals of the red, white and blue squadrons were now established and in that precedence. For the first time each squadron sailed in three divisions commanded by the admiral, vice-admiral and rear-admiral of the flag's colour.

The whole matter was now on a great scale. A detailed contemporary list provides the names of the ships which formed the nine divisions present at the opening of the Gabbard battle. There were one hundred and five vessels in this fleet and the ships' companies totalled more than sixteen thousand men exclusive of the crews of the twenty vessels which on this occasion were with Blake in the reserve. It is now that we find that wealth of flag officers with which the grand fleet would approach a major issue, the Generals Deane and Monck in the *Resolution*, Admirals Penn and Lawson, Vice-Admirals Peacock, Lane and Jordan, Rear-Admirals Howett, Graves and Goodson. Among the captains were two officers who would be admirals in the Restoration Navy as Sir Jeremiah Smith and Sir John Harman, together with Sir Roger Cuttance the future captain of the fleet. Christopher Myngs was captain of the *Elizabeth* at that time beating northwards through the Bay of Biscay. The first naval families were just appearing. Richard Haddock was lieutenant in the *Hannibal*, which his father commanded.

In addition to the fleet flagship eight vessels had successors which would lie in a twentieth century line of battle, *Renown*, *Lion*, *Tiger*, *London*, *Centurion*, *Vanguard*, *Triumph*, *Hannibal*. *Adventure*, *Diamond*, *Sapphire*, *Fox*, *Crescent*, *Dragon*, *Foresight* would reappear as cruiser names.

A few points may be made in regard to the battle of the Gabbard, an engagement freed from that care for convoys which occasioned most of the conflicts of the war. In this instance the Dutch fleet had escorted their convoy to the Shetlands, and both sides now sought for an engagement. Perhaps the Dutch were anxious to escape from the danger of blockade which threatened them.

It seems that the English meant to fight in file at half-cannon shot. The conception of the long inviolable line of battle was still in the future. It could not be attained with a great mass of ships of such a varying size and armament. It was in the almost perfect calm of a June morning that the two fleets made contact. The English moving southwards towards the enemy had anchored off the south end of the Gabbard shoal some forty miles east of Harwich. The wind was so light on the first morning of the battle that,





BATTLE OF SOLEBAY  
*by William van de Velde the Elder*

although the English stood towards the Dutch at daybreak, it was after eleven before action was first joined.

Very early in the action Richard Deane, one of the generals at sea and a close ally of the Protector, was killed by a chain shot on the flagship's quarterdeck. In the afternoon a *mêlée* developed. "For three hours,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Monck, "the dispute was very sharp on both sides, which continued from three till six in the evening, at which time the enemy bore right away before the wind. Only the frigates gave chase as long as there was any light to distinguish the one from the other."

That evening Blake rejoined before the decisive engagement the next day. During the afternoon he had made sail down the Thames towards the battle. When lying in the *Essex* in the middle of the Gunfleet he had sent a message ashore to the Navy Commissioners.<sup>2</sup> He asked for information "that I may resolve accordingly, being desirous to put in for my share for the service of the Commonwealth at the present juncture."

Morning found the Dutch at a disadvantage opposed by much superior forces and with their ammunition running low. The details of the action are confused. The Dutch admiral Tromp himself reported<sup>3</sup> that he could give no clear account "because I was lying so frequently in the smoke of the cannon." We can picture the masts rising through the smoke clouds as they lay billowing out on the smooth water. After four hours the wind increased and veered to W.S.W. and the Dutch tried to extricate themselves and make sail towards their harbours. Nineteen of their vessels were sunk or captured with a loss of three thousand seamen killed and wounded.

It will be seen that the battle of the Gabbard has none of the time comparisons of later actions. There is much that never will be known. Still all that we can discover well conveys the sense of endurance, and it is clear that this hammer-and-tongs struggle sprang from a grasped initiative. Later we can see Blake's mind in action in the plans for his attack on Santa Cruz and in his Mediterranean operations; but the Gabbard was surely one of the hardest fought encounters of the great admiral.

One can gather here a few impressions. They all underline that sober state which the naval leader of the Commonwealth maintained. In the *Naseby* Blake had his negro servant Domingo and his own

<sup>1</sup> *The First Dutch War*, 1652-4, v, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, v, p. 68½.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, v, p. 77.

plate and linen. He had his gold chain with him "bestowed by the late Parliament." His captains would come to drink a pretty cup of sack in his great cabin. In the spring before he died he wrote<sup>1</sup> a letter to Edward Montagu from his last flagship. "The *Swiftsure*, in which I was, is so foul and unwieldy through the defects of her sheathing laid on for the voyage to Jamaica that I thought it needful to remove into the *George* although in regard both of necessary and honourable appointments answerable to the countenance and consequence of the ship much unfit to bear the Standard of England." There was indeed a continuity through his campaigns and he drew about him a legend of English sea power. The Oldmixon life is at any rate a sound authority for tradition. "Eating a little bread with two or three glasses of canary wine he went to bed. The most part of his sleep was very short for four or five hours and then as the cabin window lightened he turned out."

Blake spent himself upon his constant effort. The greater part of his last three years of life had been passed in the Mediterranean pursuing the war with Spain that Cromwell's government had embarked on. Dropsy was gaining on the admiral and he suffered now from scurvy. It was in the early morning during the late summer of 1657 that his flagship *George*, with other ships in company, was sighted at the entrance to Plymouth Sound. "Three hours before, wrote Captain Hatsell at noon on August 7, "it pleased the Lord to put a period to the days of General Blake. As he lived, so he continued to his death faithful."

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Robert Blake*, p. 381.

## *The Restoration Navy*

WHEN Blake died he was bringing his fleet back from Salée on the coast of Barbary. He had spent a season in Spanish waters; he had been for a year in the Mediterranean. In spite of the North Sea battles of the second and third Dutch wars the English naval life was focused at this period on that inland sea. Enemy attacks had drawn attention to the considerable volume of sea-borne trade with Italy and the Levant which could be menaced. Already under the Commonwealth hostile action had led on to convoys; the passing squadrons required bases; we now come to the conception of the isolated fortress and the harbour which it commands.

It was thus that Tangier was seen when it was offered by the Queen of Portugal as part of the dowry which the Princess Catherine would bring to Charles II. We are approaching the days of the *guerre de course* and of an intense awareness of vulnerable hostile commercial traffic. There was slowly forming that map of the trade routes of the world which would hardly be modified by steam and would endure with all its war-time perils until the coming of wireless telegraphy. Almost at stated intervals the fleets of the trading companies would set out on their long voyages. They would disappear into the ocean at the mercy of foreign raiders should a naval war break out.

With this background one can observe the squadrons of rival powers patrolling in the Mediterranean intent on suppressing the Algerine corsairs and keeping an eye on one another. There were Dutch and English admirals on this station in the years after King Charles returned to England. The English used the Tagus and friendly Spanish ports like Malaga and Alicante, but after 1662 Tangier was their own.

The implications of this position are set out by Sir Julian Corbett. "As soon,"<sup>1</sup> he writes, "as the mercantile marine became a recognised burden on the Navy, the main lines of commerce became also the main lines of naval strategy and the crossing of the trade routes its focal points." Henceforward no one could neglect the importance of the Straits, although of the two guardian bases Tangier possessed

<sup>1</sup> *England in the Mediterranean*, i, p. 227.

a fame which Gibraltar would not equal for many years. The whole prosperous English trade with Southern Europe and Constantinople was threatened by any hostile power which kept effective naval strength in the Mediterranean. At the same time the acute jealousy between the East Indian and Royal African Companies and their Dutch rivals grew rather than diminished. The second Dutch war became almost inevitable. With this danger ever present it is not surprising that there was substantial identity between the Commonwealth and Restoration navies.

It is true that certain aspects of Blake's fleets did not survive the Restoration of King Charles II. In particular the years that followed witnessed the last development of the gentleman-volunteer which was the result of that close connection between the service and the Court which was emphasised by the appointment of James Duke of York the King's brother, as lord high admiral. The nature of the second and third Dutch wars encouraged the presence of such volunteers. The actions were fought so close inshore, like the battles of Lowestoft and Solebay, that the fleet in home waters in these years was usually within a ride of London.

At the same time the professional element was growing, half-pay for certain captains was introduced in 1667. The wounds of the Civil wars were quickly healed. Thus the captains' list, a conception now gradually emerging, was much more homogeneous than might appear. It is true that Prince Rupert, who was to succeed the Duke of York in his command, brought back with him into the service certain Royalist captains, notably Sir Edward Spragge and Sir Thomas Allin, who had refused to serve under the Protectorate. Even so the great majority of senior officers had owed allegiance to the Commonwealth and had fought under Blake and Penn and Monck and Deane. The amalgamation went forward smoothly. Sir John Lawson's dictum found acceptance. "An officer has nothing to do with political discussions or speculative opinions concerning government: his first and his only object ought to be to serve his country."

Already the naval world was growing into a unit from which those volunteers would be excluded who merely pressed on board in time of war. A passage from Richard Gibson's *Reminiscences* throws light upon this matter. "Robert Celey, carpenter in the *Tiger* in this action,"<sup>1</sup> so opens a reference to the *Assurance's* engagement off

<sup>1</sup> *The First Dutch War, 1652-4*, i, p. 6.

Lagos Bay in 1650, "was my captain in the *Sapphire* from November, 1655 to October, 1660, with whom this affair have oft been remembered, as also with Amos Beare, the boatswain's boy of the *Tiger* who died master attendant at Woolwich." The officers with their diverse pasts and their shared memories were now together.

The East Coast, which was to be the nursery of so many naval families, was coming into its own. Sir John Leake, the celebrated admiral of Queen Anne's reign, was born at Rotherhithe in 1656, the son of Richard Leake a native of Harwich who was at that time a gunner in the Navy. The idea of seniority, though not yet associated with naval rank in the modern sense, can be perceived. Thus in the campaign leading to the battle of Solebay Sir Thomas Allin remained unemployed because there was only one post as admiral available besides the commander-in-chief and this had to be offered to Montagu, now Earl of Sandwich.

The mention of Sir Thomas Allin brings to mind a description of his ship working her way down the river which will complete these details by an impression of the picture which naval life then presented. "My commission for the *Plymouth*,"<sup>1</sup> records Sir Thomas in his seventh journal, "was dated the 25 June (1664). The wind continuing so far easterly and the pilot Cooke losing the 26th day a westerly wind for which he was imprisoned in the Marshalsea, we could not get over Barking Shelf until July 6." In time the whole fleet sailed. "At the Buoy of the Oase Edge and in ten fathoms water we came to an anchor. We met that day six East Indiamen, the last Capt. Porter, Mr. Thos. Raven from the Straits, who all saluted us, Mr. Rudd and Henry Gilding also and a small Guinea man." The imprisonment of the pilot in the Marshalsea is worth recording as is the reference to the mass of shipping which might be met with in the London river. This last factor had now seized the townsmen's imagination. The setting for an act in Elkanah Settle's play, *The Empress of Morocco*, produced in 1673 is given thus. "The scene opens with the prospect of a large river with a glorious fleet of ships."

Against this background we can sketch the rôle of a commander in the Restoration Navy. In some respects the admirals who were characteristic of the Commonwealth seem less remote from us than such naval figures as were close to Charles II. Although the service tradition was not formed, the leaders of the Protectorate had learned

<sup>1</sup> *The Journals of Sir Thomas Allin*, Navy Records Society, i, p. 141.



in a hard school the power of discipline, Blake, Monck and Deane had all held military commands in the land fighting of the Civil wars. Blake's orders and each comment are full of purpose; the manner of his life was freed from ornament. It is true that the Puritan overtones suited his nature, but in no case would he have proved amenable to current fashion. The whole outlook of the Earl of Sandwich was very different.

This officer represented the type of the individual leader whose carefree indiscipline would not survive the emergence of professional naval custom. His younger contemporary the Duke of York was closer in spirit to the future navy. Sandwich's great position, both afloat and ashore, was one of the elements that permitted in these years that last fantastic mingling of the Court and service which was an unextinguished legacy from Queen Elizabeth. It was perhaps fitting that he should fall in the one main action of the last Dutch war. A detailed portrait of this admiral will convey an impression of that world which was about to pass away.

Edward Montagu first Earl of Sandwich was a political figure of high consequence, wealthy and ceaselessly extravagant with a questing lively but exhausted mind. At the time of his last battle it was seven years since he had been at sea, but his long career as a member of that Venetian oligarchy, which hemmed about the Lord Protector and remained on guard around King Charles, had been studded with high naval service. He had been joint general at sea with Robert Blake; he had commanded the fleet which had brought Charles II back from exile; in the second Dutch war he had fought at Lowestoft.

We can see him in Pepys's *Diary* and on Lely's canvas; the heavy figure, the lovely singing voice, the thick moustache, the high arched eyebrows and that wide patrician forehead. Like all the ruling class he had known what came of right to him. He knew, too, how to forge ahead on either tack. It was in the spring when the King was coming back, coming so profitably back to his own again that the young admiral had fallen "to singing a song made upon the Rump."

"Heaven bless the King, with his two brave Brothers,  
From Rumps and Lords of the House called Others,  
And hang these Rumping sons of their Mothers,  
Which nobody can deny."

Sandwich had always this gift of lightness, this and his service interests. He had kept his journals and rough untrained sketches. "The fishermen of Penzance say<sup>1</sup> that E.N.E. moon makes high water where they ride, but East South East the stream runs." He had made so many observations of the Comet of 1664 since he first "saw the Blazing Star against the maintopsail of the *Argo Navis*." He had corrected the chart of the English Channel in the Duke of Northumberland's volume of maps *Dell' Arcano del Mare*. He loved exactness.

All this is a prelude to the account of Lord Sandwich's death, a picture which seems to epitomise that vanished world. He died as has been said in the solitary great battle of the third and last Dutch war. This conflict, which had broken out in the spring of 1672, was to some extent provoked by the English Court as a result of the secret treaty between Charles II and Louis XIV, who was making a land attack on the Dutch Netherlands. The war was in consequence unpopular in England and Sandwich was himself opposed to it. Nevertheless he was appointed second in command, under the Duke of York, of the fleet which had been assembled in the Downs and had then anchored for watering in Southwold Bay. Sir Edward Spragge, Sir Joseph Jordan, Sir John Harman and Sir John Kempthorne were the supporting flag officers. The detail of the last portion of the engagement which ensued is very vivid.

It was the afternoon of May 28th and the battle had been hotly contested since the Dutch fleet had come down from the north at daybreak with such wind as they could find in the hazy weather. The sea was as calm "as a milk bowl" and throughout the action the ships' boats could pull from one large vessel to another. The smoke drifted along the Suffolk coast and mingled with the fog which for some hours enshrouded them. The Dutch had towed in fire-ships very slowly, a touch reminiscent of the Armada, and there had been a long hard duel between Sandwich's flagship and the *Groot Hollandia*.

In the admiral's journal there was an appreciation made in the late war which bore upon the present battle. "Besides,"<sup>2</sup> he had written in an effort to dissuade commanders from cruising off the east end of the Dogger Bank, "if they (the Dutch merchant vessels) should put it to the adventure to go home, the sea is wide and fogs

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Earl of Sandwich*, Navy Records Society, pp. 137-88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 244.

and night and the flat coast along the shore of Jutland advantageous for them to escape us by."

The sea is wide. The main factor in Sandwich's last hours was his flagship crippled and at anchor while the fog hid her consorts and the drifting battle. By the early afternoon the upper tier of guns was silenced and the English gunners lying dead. The admiral, wounded by splinters in arm and thigh, was on the quarterdeck of the *Royal James*. He bore the lavish ornament to which his equals were accustomed. The George and Star of the Garter were on his breast. He carried a jewelled watch and wore a seaman-like ring containing a small compass. In his pockets were his rings and his great blue sapphire. His sweeping black plumed hat was in his hand. The battle had for sometime been moving southward. "We must do our best,"<sup>1</sup> he said to his flag captain Richard Haddock, "to defend ourselves alone."

By forty-seven the Earl of Sandwich had gone through many phases. This was the end of all his indolent and carefree patronage; the singing of Spanish songs to his guitar; the drawing of fountains for Mr. Evelyn; the discussion on the right use of the castenets; the naval jottings.

The wind had freshened and after the briefest lull a fireship was reported bearing down upon the English vessel. She came alongside and set alight the hanging shredded sails. One of his pages describes the last sight of the admiral. "There were but ten (on deck) besides my Lord. My Lord distrusting himself by reason of his fatness and unwieldiness said he would stay somewhat longer." At two o'clock watchers on the cliffs about Southwold and Dunwich saw at a break in the weather the *Royal James* a mass of flame. It is probable that Sandwich left the ship. His body was recovered unburned from the sea.

The situation just described has a certain element of chivalry which is mediæval in its origins and goes back behind Froissart; it is the death of the isolated captain like Philip Sidney or Bayard. The fact that this disaster occurred upon the sea does not affect its general character.

In the next episode, which took place some ten years later, we can examine another facet of the naval life in the reign of Charles II.

<sup>1</sup> Cal. Dartmouth MSS, ii, p. 15.

Samuel Pepys, the most celebrated of all secretaries of the Admiralty, was a relative and dependent of Lord Sandwich who had first introduced him to the naval administration. He had been sent to give expert assistance in regard to the plans for the fortress of Tangier with which he had been so long associated. Each detail of this voyage will indicate the way in which shore custom could still mould the naval practice.

The last days of August had brought fair weather. The wind from the westward which had kept them in the Channel was now shifted and the *Grafton*, Lord Dartmouth's flagship, moved southwards towards Cape Finisterre. The admiral is one of the dimmest of English naval figures. The Patshull portrait, an idealised likeness, shows the level eyes, the brow, the curling hair of the young Royalist. Without unusual technical equipment he had a quiet unremarked capacity which was to be concealed by his attachment to the losing side. He was a man of thirty-five, a Tory in politics, scrupulous and honourable, perhaps lacking in vitality. Lord Dartmouth had a sense of family; he had a certain ease in correspondence which arose from his education at Westminster and King's and the Stone Gallery at Whitehall. He was Samuel Pepys's pleasant careful patron.

They had been driven towards the mouth of St. George's Channel and Pepys, attached to the admiral in an undefined capacity, was bent upon enjoying the experience of this sea voyage. He was now fifty and the years had sharpened his inquiring mind while sobering that channelled keen vitality which readers of the *Diary* have come to know. He had been secretary of the Admiralty for six years but had lost his offices as part of the sequence of moves made by the new Whig party against his master James Duke of York, the lord high admiral. He had now once more received employment.

It was the late summer of 1683 and Pepys sat in his cabin struggling with his seasickness and reading *Hudibras*. He soon recovered for he had made at intervals three naval expeditions. Brief extracts from the journal that he kept suggest the scene. "So up upon the quarterdeck and there walking all the morning, the sea running very high." And then come the details of two evenings. "Down to my lord's cabin and supper and then at night sat late, a fine moonshiny evening, till 11 o'clock and talking with the French lieutenant, he telling me several things of the methods of the French Navy." The following sentence provides a pendant.<sup>1</sup> "In the

<sup>1</sup> *The Tangier Papers of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Edward Chappell, Navy Records Society, p. 8.

evening till midnight upon the quarterdeck seeing the seamen dance to the song and harp."

The routine at sea was carried out with that elaborate state with which we have been familiarised. Lord Dartmouth kept his own due distance. There was music in the great cabin to which certain officers and civilians of rank would be invited. Beyond the cabin was the admiral's bedchamber and within it a closet where, behind locked doors, Lord Dartmouth could discourse in privacy. These elements in their viceregal setting were a microcosm of Whitehall. It was the method and the terminology of the Court, the carrying out of the King's business upon the sea. There was some reason, too, in all this secrecy for Sir Leoline Jenkins, the Secretary of State, had written out in his own hand the instructions setting forth the purpose of this voyage, the demolition of the forts and harbour works at Tangier and the evacuation of that English garrison.

It was this purpose that had brought the civilians on board the flagship, the lawyer Dr. Trumbull, Pepys's colleague in the evaluation of property at Tangier for compensation, the Spanish interpreter, the two secretaries and in particular the engineers. The chaplain was Dr. Ken, later the celebrated Bishop of Bath and Wells. All these sat under the new-spread awning as the ship, after a warm night, passed abreast of Finisterre.

There was visiting between ship and ship as they lay becalmed off the "North Cape." Pepys dined in Sir John Berry's ship the *Henrietta*. A volunteer, known in the vocabulary of that day as a "reformado," played the violin for them. "In the evening<sup>1</sup> on board our own ship again and late looking upon the stars to learn them, it being very calm to our great trouble."

This was the year of the Rye House Plot and of the last period of Charles II's supremacy. The first Whigs, the Earl of Shaftesbury's followers, had been decisively defeated. The weary King was cutting his commitments. Freed from his bickering parliaments and secure in the payment of his subsidy from Louis XIV he yet could not afford to keep against the Moors this expensive fortress at the entrance to the Straits which, twenty-one years earlier, had formed a part of his wife's dowry.

During all this time Pepys had known the fortress, first as Clerk of the Acts to the Navy and then, as far back as 1665, as Treasurer of Tangier. He had seen the Governors come and go. The *Diary* is

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

strewn with comments on them. He had watched each naval cruise to the Mediterranean whether to harry the Algerines or to show the flag, Sir Edward Spragge and Narborough. The details of each commission were before him. With that long shrewd memory, a landsman with a flair for organising, Pepys knew it all.

He has told us so much and we can reconstruct the scene as he sat in his cabin in the *Grafton* "a low squat man," heavy in build, Puritan, inhibited, ashamed to be so amorous. There he would remain considering, settled into the chair clamped to the deck before his table, holding his silver pen. The spectacles would be at his side, the mathematic paper and tablets spread out before him. His perspective glass brought back those profitable fashionable exercises at the Royal Society. Upon a shelf there stood "the periwigs, combs and powders, plasters, tooth water and wash balls." There was the velvet cap and the white hat to wear ashore at Tangier; his toothpick case; his reading for the voyage, technical manuals, the *Holy War*, à Kempis, Spanish works. He had galoshes then fresh in use; a sea gown newly purchased; his doublet sleeves altered to the sea fashion.

He had changed from the large-nosed untidy figure of the Lely canvas and was settling down to the conception of the Kneller portrait, the face severe beneath the periwig, the cheeks weighty and developed, the double chin. It was thirteen years since the pain behind the eyes had come to trouble him, but he had mastered it and could now once more contrive his shorthand. The stone in the kidney was a past ailment. He was consequential, loyal and rancorous. To this must be added a phrase from Mr. Bryant's study the *Tears of Peril* which illuminates another facet. He speaks of Pepys<sup>1</sup> as being "full of inextinguishable curiosity and an infinity capacity for being pleasant."

There were unpleasant matters ahead of him when he got to Africa but his immense vitality concentrated upon each present detail. Pepys noted the superiority of the Dutch charts. He turned to the question of the lack of standing of the masters on whom the sole responsibility for the ship's navigation rested. He contended that no theory had yet been set forward in regard to "the currents in the World, either as to the truth of their setting or their force and speed of running." Then he would come up through the hatchway upon the quarterdeck and carry on his long discussions. "Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *Tears of Peril*, by Arthur Bryant, p. 39.

Atkins did observe that it is true what is ordinarily said that the best navigator is the best looker-out."

They were running southwards into a tricky situation. The senior officers of the Dutch wars were dead; Spragge drowned, Sir Christopher Myngs and Sir John Lawson killed in action, Sir John Harman and Sir John Kempthorne dead, Sir Robert Holmes retired. Sir Thomas Allin was old and gone ashore. In their place there had come those who had joined the Navy since the Restoration. Some were from the merchant service; more were from the Court. There was a close link of association between the admiral and his captains and again between the various captains and their lieutenants.

One of the chief problems to occupy the minds of Lord Dartmouth and Mr. Pepys was that of the influence exerted by the late admiral and commander-in-chief within the Straits, Mr. Arthur Herbert, who had only just returned to England when they set out. So deeply was the fleet divided on his account that Pepys in his notes separates the officers into "my Lord's friends" and Herbert's "creatures." These early commissions in the Mediterranean were intimately bound up with Vice-Admiral Herbert's policy and administration.

There is as yet no real study of the life of this flag officer. His career was a fruit of the Restoration Navy and he would survive to command the fleet which brought William III from Holland to Torbay. He had had twenty years of naval service and had lost an eye in action against the Algerines; his whole active life was to be concluded by the time that he was forty-three. Contemporary historians are against him. Pepys is bitterly hostile, John Mackay sarcastic and Burnet an inveterate enemy. It was Herbert's misfortune to be the Prince of Orange's great supporter and then to be disowned by him. Still the fact remains that he attached to himself two of the greatest seamen of the next generation, Sir George Rooke and Sir Clowdisley Shovell. It was perhaps the nature of these attachments, which amounted in some cases to an alliance, that caused the trouble.

As they approached Tangier, sailing southwards past the Rock of Lisbon, Pepys would digest the stories of the late vice-admiral. It was a barren period for naval captains and the practice had developed of making what were called Good Voyages. These involved the granting of licences to individual officers to carry bullion or specie or merchant goods in warships through the corsair-infested seas.

There in his house at Tangier Mr. Herbert would arrange these matters while his friends stood combing his perruque for him. Ill paid and with few prospects it was only from their admiral that the captains could receive this golden rain. It was an added source of bitterness to Pepys that the vice-admiral could thus build up a fraternity which, while in the service of the King, owed no duty to the Admiralty in London.

It was on 14th September that the *Grafton*, which had anchored for the night off Cape Spartel, weighed and came slowly into the harbour of Tangier past the great Mole. The weathering honey-coloured stone of the fortress walls and of the Governor's House and Upper Castle stood out above the white-washed fronts and terraced roofs of Moorish houses. The sandhills lay all about them. The market gardens stretched between the outer forts whose names bring back that Restoration world, Henrietta, Charles and Kendal Forts; James Fort and Anne Fort, Cambridge Fort, York Castle, each called in honour of James II and his wife Anne Hyde and of their sons who died in infancy. We can imagine these bastions completed and dedicated by the loyal governors to each royal anniversary. Out away through Catherine Port, named after the Queen from Portugal, the tracks led into the green wood "a ravishing wilderness of oranges, lemons, figgs, scarlet oaks and cork trees, and instead of bryars and thorns thickened with damask roses, groves of myrtle, jessamine and bushes of rosemary." Beyond the Jews River lay the Moors and their hostile country. Within such narrow confines stood Tangier the White.

On their arrival Governor Kirke was rowed out in his barge and the plans for laying the mines which would blow up the fortifications were discussed. With a glass they could study the Moors' camp from the *Grafton's* quarterdeck. There would be a large population to be evacuated, some twelve thousand all told. In Tangier there were four hundred children. Pepys went to rest "and the scuttle being open<sup>1</sup> it blew very hard into my cabin upon my bed all night, but being at anchor we lay much more still than hitherto and so I slept well."

The next day the *Happy Return*, a fourth-rate under the command of Captain Sir John Wyborne, came into the port. The *James* galley, Captain Shovell, and the *Dartmouth* were due to come back in a few days. The *Dover*, *Centurion* and *Sapphire* were lying in the harbour.

<sup>1</sup> *Tangier Papers*, p. 17.



It is worth examining rather closely the first of the English naval bases in the Mediterranean or its approaches.

The character of the harbour was determined by the great Mole which was the most considerable work till then undertaken by English engineers. Recourse was had to the experience of the Italians in the construction of the Mole at Genoa; but there were problems in an Atlantic anchorage which did not confront those who built in tideless waters. By 1676 the unfinished Mole was already four hundred and seventy yards in length and thirty in breadth. It was commanded from the bastions of York Castle and batteries of great guns were placed upon it. Five brass cannon had been taken from His Majesty's ship *Reserve* to strengthen these defences. The custom house in the Dutch style of building opened out on a piazza bounded on the waterside by Crane Wharf. There were houses on the Mole and "on the inner side twenty-four arched cellars and before them a curious walk with pillars for the mooring of ships." A return arm, sixty yards in length, was to be built to break the eastern seas.

On the other hand in the harbour the ground was full of rocks and very foul. The ships' cables were often cut to pieces. The great seas coming in from the Atlantic made white and muddy water a league out from the shore. At the same time sand silted up against the stonework and, even at the Mole head, there was a depth of not more than ten feet at low water. In consequence there could only ride within the Mole "four or five sixth-rate ships, carefully moored head and stern, and with them about fifteen 'cettias,' the small local vessels with the lateen sails."

The frigates would cruise within the Straits on convoy work. While Lord Dartmouth and Pepys were in Tangier the *Centurion*, Captain Ralph Wren, brought in a corsair from Saltee the *Two Red Lions*, which had on board an English "renegado" and was commanded by "Ali Washum Rais a Tuniseen." In these reigns of Charles II and James II there was peace among the Christian Powers in the Mediterranean except for an occasional engagement arising from the wars with Holland. Sailing in company down the coast of Barbary the English ships moved off to friendly ports: they lay in the Grand Duke of Tuscany's dock at Leghorn: they went to Malta of the Knights. This brings us to the most remarkable feature of naval life at that period in those waters.

A few years earlier all the naval stores had been removed from

Tangier to Gibraltar, then a Spanish possession, "at the courtesy and within the command of another prince." Warships were accustomed to careen and re-fit in Cadiz harbour. The Governor of Tangier, asking for troops of horse to be recruited in England, stated that he could not depend upon Spanish succour. It is strange to find the English naval power depending for these facilities on a foreign nation.

Such an impossible situation could not continue. By contrast a comment by Charles II's Swedish engineer, who accompanied Lord Dartmouth's expedition, has a note of realism. "Major Beckmann," remarks Pepys,<sup>1</sup> "do speak to me greatly in commendation of Gibraltar as the place which above all others our King ought to have for keeping an entire command in the Straits."

Meanwhile, it was decided that Tangier should be abandoned. During that spring of 1684 the mines were blown, the ships made ready. In the Dartmouth Papers there are preserved minute details of the evacuation. We can see again the vessels crowded with the garrison and their dependents, with the English merchants and the foreign stewards, cooks and traders, the Portuguese and French, Spaniards and Italians. Besides the vessels bound for England ships went round the Mediterranean taking them to their own countries, leaving to the Moors a deserted broken fortress.

There was Solomon Pariente who had come to Tangier from London eight years earlier as interpreter to the then Governor Lord Inchiquin. "I brought here,"<sup>2</sup> we read of him in a deposition, "about two thousand pounds besides my wife's jewels and plate and household goods insomuch that they call me here the Rich Jew." There were officers' and sergeants' wives and children, the apothecary and victualling agent, the town major, the chirurgion, the chirurgion's mate. There was William Smith Esquire the Mayor "a great proprietor" with furniture from the fine houses in St. John's street in Rua Coelio. Families carried the contents of the poorer dwellings in Gully Hole and Jews' Court and the Ground under the Wall. There were coaches and Lady Mary Kirke's sedan chair. The Portuguese Canons brought out sixty chests and the pictures in their great gilded frames torn down from the chapels in their church. The Anglican Minister from St. Charles the Martyr had with him the Tangier Public Library with its globes and maps and bibles and its

<sup>1</sup> Cal. Dartmouth MSS, ii, p. 104.

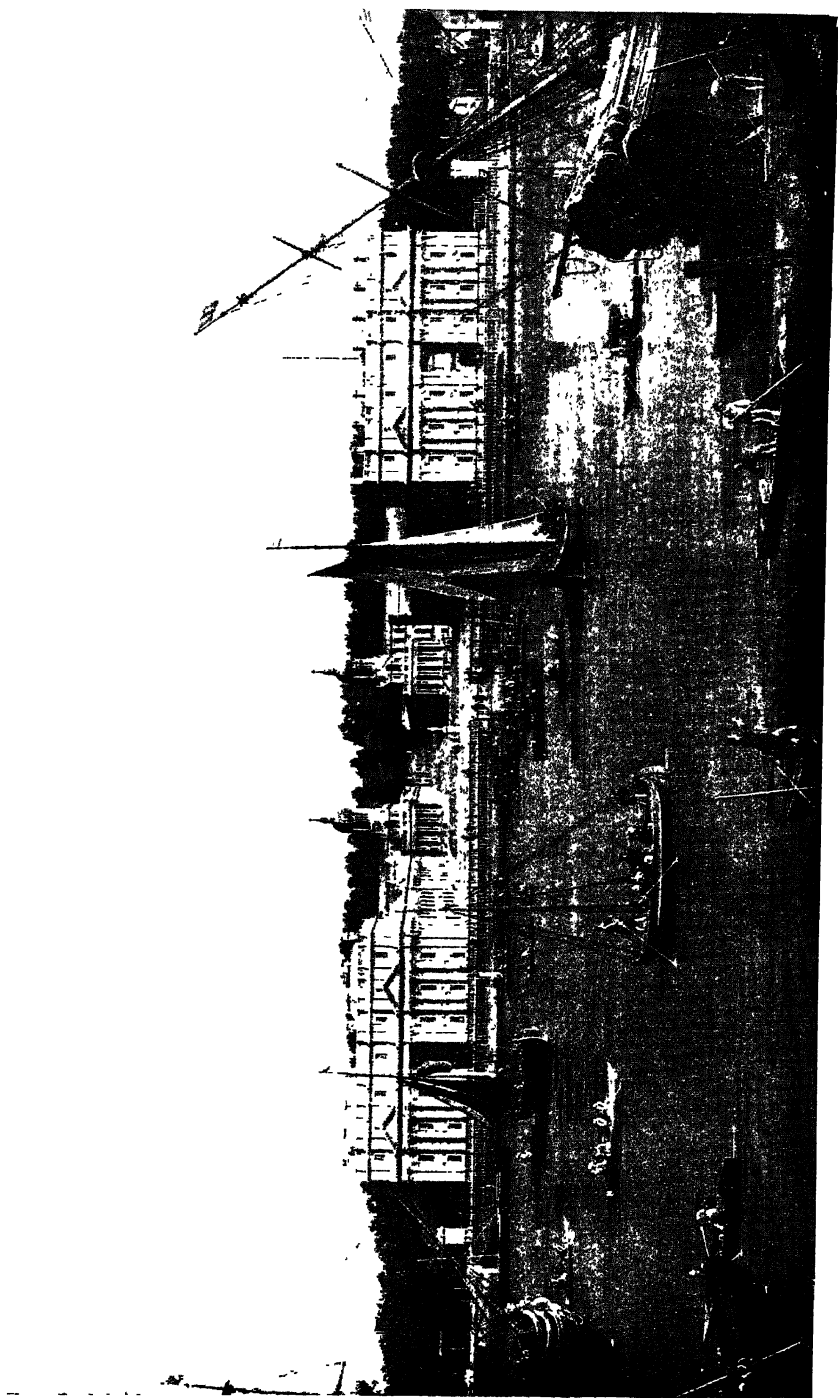
<sup>2</sup> Notes General in *Tangier Papers*, pp. 231-2.

copies of Sir William Davenant's *Works* and Fuller's *Worthies*. There were the eight velvet cushions from the Governor's pew and the fringed hearse cloth and the chalices and flagons and the large painted wooden Lion and Unicorn. With them went Mr. Thomas Paine, a woollen merchant ruined in the Fire of London and now clerk of the church of Tangier. Among the last to leave were Mr. Eccles, who doubled the employments of gunner and usher and writing master to the school, and Captain Reus the master fire-worker. A copy of *Paradise Lost* was left behind in one of the houses of the empty town.

One of Pepys's comments,<sup>1</sup> written rather earlier, well conveys the atmosphere of the scene. "I went alone in the boat round the bay and saw the ruins very plain of old Tangier and several Moors all along the shore gathering of driftwood, and the manner of their huts. Coming back upon the water I first saw how blue the remote hills will look in the evening about the sun's going down." The log of the captain of the *Grafton* gives in brief detail the final scenes. On 15th January seamen armed with muskets and poleaxes were sent ashore from all the ships. The stockades by the town were taken up and the first mine was sprung. For nearly two months the work went on, the blowing up of the fortifications and the walls, the levelling of the houses. Much time was expended in contriving the destruction of the Mole. On 6th March, a day of fresh and rainy weather, Lord Dartmouth himself set fire to the last mine. The fuse burned for an hour before exploding; only a very few men were injured by the falling stones.

The demolition of this English fortress would remain long in naval memory. Among the junior officers connected with the operation was George Byng, a youth of twenty acting commander of the *Deptford* ketch. He would survive to be the victor of Cape Passaro. Rooke was captain of the *Hampshire*. On 8th March, 1684, Lord Dartmouth sailed away from Tangier. Twenty years later, on 4th August, 1704, Sir George Rooke would return to these same waters and take Gibraltar.

<sup>1</sup> *Tangier Papers*, p. 47.



GREENWICH PALACE  
*by Canaletto*



## PART TWO

### ACHIEVEMENT

#### *The Hanoverian Navy*

EACH SERVICE change develops very gradually and in the history of the Royal Navy the strengthening alterations are especially difficult to perceive and analyse. This is particularly the case when considering the decades which follow the Revolution of 1688. Much further research will be required before we can penetrate to the true character of the principal flag officers of this period, Arthur Herbert, Earl of Torrington, and Arthur Russell, Earl of Orford. Still in many respects these years must have witnessed the culmination of naval change. James II had been driven from the throne, but the work which he and Pepys achieved when at the Admiralty had at length borne fruit; in a word the Navy was a separate service. It was no longer possible to make a simple transfer from the naval to the military arm of the Crown's forces. In spite of the long stretches of half-pay, the Navy claimed its senior officers for all their active life-time.

It seems correct to state that political revolutions seldom affect the composition of navies whatever serious consequences for discipline may be entailed. It is remarkable that the Italian fleet at the battle of Lissa in 1866 should have been an amalgam of two such different sea services as those of Sardinia and the Two Sicilies. The Revolution of 1688, which installed William III and Mary upon the English throne, was in this respect no exception. Lord Dartmouth, then in command of King James's fleet, was almost the only senior officer to be lost to the Navy by these changes, apart from an occasional Catholic like Sir Roger Strickland, admiral of the Blue, who had been forced to resign before the Dutch ships sailed.

Slowly the Navy was seen to provide a career for an officer; it became the preoccupation of a wise parent; there was already in some aspects a naval type. The naval tavern, the naval jest, the officers' routine were all established. Prize money could be discerned on the horizon. It was clear, too, that the new century would have its fill of wars. At the same time two factors tended to postpone

all fresh development, the static conception of marine architecture and the rigid laws which governed the actions of a fleet.

Thus the long stretch between 1688 and 1759, the year of the taking of Quebec and of Hawke's and Boscawen's victories, stands out as a period of a rather heavy and unchanging stillness in the character of the English naval life. A rhythm, which was massive and almost imperceptible, was carried through the decades of the long Whig dominance. Under these circumstances the transition from reign to reign, and even from Queen Anne's rule to that of the House of Hanover, was singularly smooth. Much more significant than any change in English politics was the regular asthmatic pulsation from a war to a peace establishment and back again.

The sea service took its own high place in the national economy. It was an element in the consciousness of English life. In George Farquhar's *Sir Harry Wildair*, produced in 1701, Captain Fireball cries at the gaming table, "Allons for the Thatched House and the Mediterranean." The period of wonder was being left behind and satire would come to fill its place. Wycherley, who had been at sea as a volunteer, had printed *The Plain Dealer* which featured Captain Manly of the Royal Navy.

The graded military conception of successive rank was now established: Flag rank had thus obtained that hierarchic quality of perquisites and precedence which the mind of Louis XIV had imprinted on the thought forms of the western Courts. In 1702, for instance, George Byng, the future victor of Cape Passaro, was not ready to accept a private ship because he had been first captain in the *Royal Oak* to Admiral Russell. The post captains' list had now become a stair which jostling officers mounted step by step.

The atmosphere of heavy suspicion thus engendered is well displayed in a comment on the life of Captain Stephen Martin, an experienced sea officer born in 1666. At the age of fifty-eight he applied for a command which might have reopened the prospect of his promotion to flag rank. "It was suspected to be done,"<sup>1</sup> writes his biographer of the failure of this effort, "by some vile insinuations of Sir George Byng, excited and inspired by those behind upon the list that had the next expectation." Here was the mind of the eighteenth century.

It was to Charles II and still more to his brother James, Duke of York, that much was owed. The Board of Admiralty, traceable to

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Captain Stephen Martin*, Navy Records Society, p. 160.

1673, had by this time taken on the form that Georgian admirals would find familiar. There were other landmarks. King Charles, after consultation with Isaac Newton,<sup>1</sup> "persuaded Wren to build upon the mound in the royal gardens the famous octagonal room for Flamsteed's quadrants, which we know to-day as Greenwich Observatory."

The use of the union flag on the bowsprit staff, the ensign at the taffrail and, in a private ship, the pendant had gone back to this period; so had the practice of examination for a commission as lieutenant. It was now an age of forms. One entry in the journal kept so meticulously by Sir George Rooke's secretary will bear this out.<sup>2</sup> It occurs under the date 11th May, 1700. "The Admiral (Rooke) having read his instructions and finding they were not countersigned by the Secretary of State, dispatched away an express by way of Sheerness to Mr. Secretary Vernon to have them countersigned."

With the Prince of Orange on the throne co-operation with Dutch admirals became inevitable. There was a cruise of squadrons to the Sound at the entrance to the Baltic, one of those browbeating diplomatic voyages with which the Scandinavian Powers would grow familiar throughout the sailing era. "Dispatched,"<sup>3</sup> runs one of the instructions for Rooke's fleet, "order of rendezvous in case of separation to be before the Maeze on the coast of Holland, or in case of being put further to the northward on the Broad Fourteens." That last name brings back those waters which were to be the grave of the *Cressy* and her consorts in the 1914-18 war.

Already there was an air of leisure. "Went"<sup>4</sup> notes the same journal, "to my Lord of Portland's gardens about a mile from the Hague." The flagship spoke the *Henrietta* yacht "with Lord Villiers on board going to travel." Still, the short-lived Peace of Ryswyk would soon be followed by the death of the King of Spain, the presage of a war of succession in which Louis XIV would be aligned against the House of Austria, the latter supported by England and Holland.

In the summer of 1701 a great fleet was once more assembling. The ships had not changed very much in their appearance in fifty years. The open stern galleries had now returned with a simple

<sup>1</sup> *The Naval Side of British History*, by Sir Geoffrey Callender, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *The Journal of Sir George Rooke*, Navy Records Society, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.



form of balustrading. Figureheads were carved of oak with a mass of detail and elaboration. The first-rates built after the Restoration and named in honour of the royal persons had each equestrian portrait figures. The lion figurehead was a convention. There were carved wooden wreaths around the gun ports.

A certain solid attention was given to the gunnery. "Guns to be mounted and butts to be placed,"<sup>1</sup> so runs one order, "in every port where his Majesty's ships are laid up." Two fleet instructions are worth quoting.<sup>2</sup> "Approved of Colonel Browne's proposal of shooting grenade shells and fire-shot out of cannons. Approved of proposal for cartridges provided it can be found practicable to preserve them in our moist powder rooms." Ammunition and stores had their own place in the holds below the lower deck.

A minor change of rig was slowly coming. The fixed spritsail and the spritsail topsail on the bowsprit had been in use for twenty years as had the square topsail on the single mizzen. To the two staysails on the bowsprit was now added another triangle sail, the jib, set between the fore topmast head and a short spar, called the jib boom, which was added as a prolongation of the bowsprit.

A quotation<sup>3</sup> from Rooke's Journal is unexpected in its modern touch. "Monday, 28 July, 1701. Dirty, blowing weather. Nothing happened to-day." Thus the great ships lay at Spithead with the candles shining in their high stern lanterns through the warm night in the driving rain.

The admiral's secretary recalls the crowded scene as he sat writing in the cabin of the *Shrewsbury*. "Wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty to desire orders may be given to the Navy Board for surgeons, necessaries and slop-clothes." Ordered<sup>4</sup> "that the hospital ship may bring a quantity of Thames water for the fleet." They had found eight warships in the Downs; the *Mermaid* passed them bound for the Cape Verde Islands. "Met the *Southampton* off the Culvers Point going to Virginia."

There were sixteen men-of-war in Portsmouth harbour and a further eight lying in Spithead. Vice-Admiral Benbow's squadron was preparing to sail for the West Indies. A few days later Rear-Admiral Hopson with his flag in the *Revenge* anchored on coming in from Holland. In the great fleet there were many officers who would serve in the wars and survive through the whole long peace. The commanders in the war of Austrian Succession then held their

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 124.

junior appointments. It is worth recalling a group of names of men who would in time be celebrated. John Balchen commanded the *Vulcan* fireship; Chaloner Ogle was a lieutenant in the *Royal Oak*, Thomas Mathew in the *Deal Castle* and Richard Lestock in the *Exeter*; Edward Vernon was a midshipman in the *Torbay*. Among the captains were Charles Wager of the *Medway* and John Norris of the *Exeter*; Lord Dursley at twenty-one had the frigate *Sorlings*. Sir Clowdisley Shovell was a senior flag officer.

In the wide anchorage there lay the ships with their sober naming which were the predecessors of the "county" cruisers, the *Essex*, *Kent*, *Cumberland*, *Suffolk*, *Monmouth*, *Lancaster* and *Dorsetshire*. The forerunners of the "town" class were about them, the *Bristol*, *Exeter* and *Falmouth*. Away on distant stations were the *Weymouth*, *Chester*, *Newcastle*, the *Cornwall* and the *Hampshire*. In Rooke's fleet were some modern ship-names that would endure, the *Grafton*, for Charles II's naval son, the *Russell* and the *Barfleur* for the admiral and his victory.

This fleet was manned by those methods which would obtain throughout the Georgian period. Impressment was regular and much disliked. On the other hand a certain special consideration was now given to the volunteer. Men were encouraged to enter for particular ships and in some cases they attached themselves to officers and followed them from vessel to vessel. Characteristics of the wardroom life were being built up; a new captain might bring in his own lieutenants. An entry in Captain Loades's journal bears on this point. "This day,"<sup>1</sup> he writes in describing an exchange of flagships, "Sir Clowd. Shovell, Sir Jno. Morris, myself, and lieutenants, removed into the *Association*. Sir Thos. Dilkes and Captain Whitaker with his lieutenants going into the *Britannia*."

The ships with their great complements were very crowded, and in war time Marines were also carried. At this time these regiments, first established in 1664, were still formed and disbanded as hostilities began and ceased. A certain flexibility was still in evidence and it was usual to reduce the number of men and guns in warships proceeding to distant stations.

These facts are seen against the two chief duties assigned in time of war to the Royal Navy; the convoying of merchant shipping, which was in constant danger from the zest with which the French

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Captain Edmund Loades, cf. *War at Sea Under Queen Anne, 1702-1708*, by Commander J. H. Owen, R.N., p. 17.

pursued that running war on commerce known as the *guerre de course*, and the carrying through of a Mediterranean strategy. In that theatre political objectives were now added to that protection of the trade which was a permanent concern. Meanwhile a main fleet was kept "in being," the phrase was Torrington's and just minted, and became the prototype of the grand fleet which would appear across the eighteenth century.

Lord Nottingham, giving reasons to the Pensionary of Holland for sending a fleet to the Mediterranean, strikes the note of the dynastic strategy of the new period.<sup>1</sup> "But above all to induce the Duke of Savoy to declare for the House of Austria by giving such diversions as I have mentioned to the French in Italy." It was at this time that the celebrated Methuen Treaty gave the use of the Tagus to the Maritime Powers. Henceforward this last expression would denote Great Britain and the United Provinces, which then followed her leadership.

Meanwhile there had come about the establishment of the Soundings Squadron which derived its name from the scene of operations, that submerged shelf off the mouth of the Channel where the homeward or outward-bound shipping would enter or leave those waters which were too deep for the practice of sounding with the lead. Commander J. H. Owen well describes the general situation. "As a rule," he writes,<sup>2</sup> "the convoys were a match for the French in the North Sea and in the Sleeve of the Channel, though they might pick up stragglers and coasting vessels. In the Soundings, on the other hand, while the outward-bound fleets were generally too strong for even squadronal attack, there was always the chance that wind or fog might scatter the fleets coming home from distant parts, and there were always the running ships." The last phrase refers to vessels sailing independently; these would for ever be exposed to a special danger from surface raiders.

The stage was set for those actions fought in the Atlantic which were the remote precursors of Howe's battle of the Glorious first of June. At the same time there was still a great desire to avoid cruising in the winter season. The resolutions of a council of flag officers<sup>3</sup> held at Spithead on 3rd September, 1701 bear out this point. "It is resolved we do cruise in the latitude of forty-nine

<sup>1</sup> British Museum, Add. MSS. 29595. The position is discussed in Owen, *op. cit.*, chapter ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Sir George Brooke*, p. 142.

degrees thirty minutes from twenty to fifty leagues distant from Scilly, but with respect to the season of the year we cannot but concur with former resolutions of councils of flag officers in time of war that it is very unsafe to keep the great ships at sea after the 10th of September." On that date at the latest they were to return to St. Helens "or sooner, if the wind should happen to set in and blow hard westerly."

That summer James II died at St. Germain's and Louis XIV recognised his son as his heir. The Dutch king did not long survive his predecessor. On 21st February, 1702, William III fractured his collar bone when his pony Sorrel stumbled on a molehill at Hampton Court. On Sunday, 8th March, he died, and at two o'clock on the following afternoon Admiral Rooke and his secretary reached Portsmouth Dock. "Immediately<sup>1</sup> went off aboard the *Stirling Castle*. Found all the officers concerned for the loss of the King but expressing a due satisfaction for the Queen's accession to the Crown." Thus stood the situation of the Navy at the beginning of the reign of Anne.

The crucial lasting consequence of the war of Spanish Succession, in so far as it affected naval life, was the acquisition of Gibraltar which fell to an attack by Admiral Rooke. In spite of all the sieges it was always to remain a British fortress. At the time more attention was paid to the capture of Port Mahon in Minorca which remained in British hands from 1708 until it was lost as a result of the indecisive action between Admirals Byng and La Galissonnière almost half a century later. This was the period of that old saying that there were four good harbours in the western Mediterranean; June, July, August and Port Mahon. There now began an era which is, perhaps, the least worked over in all naval history, those early Georgian reigns which were in time to be dominated by Sir Robert Walpole.

The whole early part of the century from the death of Anne until the rise of Pitt awaits its historian and the extreme barrenness of printed naval sources only reflects a widespread condition in the life of England. Who can now form an impression of such first Lords of the Admiralty as Lord Berkeley formerly Lord Dursley or Sir Charles Wager or even the great Lord Torrington? They were all

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 146.

sea officers of wide experience who long wore their flags afloat. Their images are singularly transient.

Torrington certainly was the key figure. Sir George Byng, who was ennobled by that title which had previously been held by Arthur Herbert, was a careful swift adherent of the principles of 1688 and of the House of Hanover. He seems to have been the real type of political flag officer, astute and conciliatory. When his long domination at last ended in 1733 the masses of his correspondence, official as well as private, were transferred to Wrotham. There for many years these papers remained inaccessible, and this added to the difficulty of visualising the early Georgian naval world.

On one side this period is characterised by the prosaic figure of Josiah Burchett, who held Pepys's office of Secretary of the Admiralty from 1698 until 1742. He had begun life as Pepys's body servant and confidential clerk and had then risen through the patronage of Admiral Russell, afterwards Earl of Orford, who had taken young Mr. Burchett with him as his secretary when he went to command in the Mediterranean.

In the reticent *Memoirs of Transactions at Sea*, which Burchett published, there are some sentences which bring back the atmosphere of that time very perfectly. "In time of peace," he writes<sup>1</sup> in his foreword in reference to the naval strength of Britain, "these ships are laid up at the principal yards, namely Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Woolwich, Deptford and Sheerness; but the biggest, and the greatest number of the biggest ships, are always lodged at Chatham.

"At the small dockyards before mentioned are the magazines of all sorts of naval stores; and how much it imports the good of the publick to keep those magazines constantly replenished every one is able to judge. They are generally supplied from the Northern Crowns, that is to say, hemp, pitch, tar, rosin, and several other species; but as for masts, particularly those of largest size, they are brought from New England; and it is much to be wished that the improving of the afore-mentioned commodities in Her Majesty's own Plantations might meet with all possible encouragement." We have something of the static conception of the eighteenth century; the Maritime Powers; the Northern Crowns.

The term "capital ship" appears in Burchett's work, and the years of peace would reinforce that expectation of a chessboard equality in every major naval action. In terms of land warfare we are

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Transactions at Sea*, to the Reader, edition of 1703.

approaching the period of the Maréchal de Saxe, the marches and counter marches of the French world of the old regime. On the naval side the conception of the line of battle was fast gaining that sacrosanct character which in these years would become attached to the principles of the military art.

We cannot exclude from our imagination the great victories which were to come, but to contemporaries it seemed a very old Navy and this is borne out by the expressions used in a *Narrative of the Proceedings of His Majesty's Fleet*, printed in 1744. "A line of battle," we read,<sup>1</sup> "is the basis and formulation of all discipline in sea fights, as is universally practiced by all the nations that are masters of any power at sea. It has had the test of a long experience, and stood before the stroke of time, pure and unalter'd, handed down by our predecessors." It was an era, too, of strict ceremony tempered by speculation. A phrase of Burchett's is most illuminating. "For easing the publick charge, methinks that great ships should be as early paid off each year as 'tis possible, if it shall be found necessary to fit them out at all."

The naval life is thus glimpsed in sentences like these which reflect a drained solemnity, in satire and in ballads. There is a striking contrast in these approaches. About the satire there early hung what we would recognise as a Hogarthian flavour. Certainly nothing could be further from the stylised and elaborate portraiture of Georgian commanders.

A description of the seaman<sup>2</sup> written by Ned Ward will make this clear. "He looks the most formidable when others appear drooping; for see him in bad weather, in his fur-cap and Wapping large watch-coat, and you'd swear the Czar was returned once more from Muscovy; and yet he is never in his true figure but within a pitch't jacket, and then he's as invulnerable to a cudgel as a hog in armour."

The account<sup>3</sup> of Lieutenant Bowling in *Roderick Random* has the same blurred edges. "He was a strong built man, somewhat bandy-legged, with a neck like that of a bull, and a face which, you might easily perceive had withstood the most obstinate assaults of the weather. His dress consisted of a soldier's coat, altered for him by the ship's tailor, a striped flannel jacket, a pair of red breeches,

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative of the Proceedings of His Majesty's Fleet*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> This is discussed in detail in Commander C. N. Robinson's *The British Tar in Fact and Fiction*, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Roderick Random*, chapter iii.

japanned with pitch, clean grey worsted stockings, large silver buckles, that covered three-fourths of his shoes, a silver-laced hat, a black bob wig in buckle, a check shirt, a silk handkerchief, a hanger with brass handle, girded to his thigh by a tarnished laced belt, and a good oak plant under his arm." Between them these two sketches would affect the landsman's picture of the naval character. Twin aspects remain ineffaceable, the roughness and the honesty. The ballads did not fail to underline the latter character.

The principal *motif* is of course the patriotic. France was the enemy and verses from two ballads emphasise the hearty insularity. They have an additional interest in that they were written at either end of the long period. The first quotation is from "The Undaunted Seaman," to be sung to the tune of "I often for my Jenny strove," and dating from the wars of Louis XIV:<sup>1</sup>

My dear, all hazards will I run, methinks the work cannot be done  
Except I do in person go to face that perjur'd potent foe:  
We have warlike sons of thunder, which will valiantly advance  
To the wide ocean for promotion and to check the pride of France.

From the war of American Independence there dates "The Cruisers," a song adapted to the tune of "A Hunting we will go":<sup>2</sup>

"Be England to herself but true, to France defiance hurl'd,  
Give peace, America, with you, and war with all the world.  
And a-cruising we will go, oho ! oho ! oho !  
A-cruising we will go, oho ! and a-cruising we will go."

We have reached the rising tide of a high bravado. With this there went a cheerful and idyllic ranting which perhaps finds its best expression in the song that we know from its first words as "You pretty maids of Greenwich"<sup>3</sup>

"Suppose you have a sailor, that sails before the mast;  
If he's the best of husbands his breath is but a blast:  
The roaring waves their wills will have—there's no man can  
withstand—

And he may sleep in the ocean deep whilst you are on the land.

<sup>1</sup> Naval Songs and Ballads, selected and edited by C. H. Firth, Navy Records Society, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 144.

"Suppose you have a captain, a person of great fame;  
 Yet still there is great danger in sailing on the main.  
 The fates unkind in stormy wind may lay his honour low,  
 And then his wife, with careful life, laments his overthrow."

This last note is repeated in the songs made up by the sailors themselves. It comes out most clearly<sup>1</sup> in "The *Arrow* sloop of war":

"The action being over, and the pris'ners safe on board,  
 We'll keep safe below, my boys, and toss a can of grog.  
 And when we come to Portsmouth, with a girl on each knee,  
 We'll spend our money cheerfully, and then again to sea.

Nevertheless this first half of the eighteenth century is best examined in "English courage display'd,<sup>2</sup> or brave news from Admiral Vernon," a set of verses composed by a seaman "on board the *Burford*, the admiral's ship," and sent back to England from Jamaica in the winter of 1739-40:

"Then with his men he went on shore who strait began to plunder,  
 'Tis as they serv'd our ships before, and therefore is no wonder.  
 With plenty of rum and good strong wines, our men did soon get  
 mellow  
 That swore that never a house should stand in the town of Porto  
 Bello."

Two further verses will convey the cordial atmosphere:

"All their brass guns he took away, the iron ones he nailed  
 And then threw them into the sea, before from thence he sailed,  
 Many a jolly sailor's pouch was cram'd with white and yellow,  
 For they from plunder could not be kept in the town of Porto  
 Bello.

"Besides, brave Vernon freely gave amongst his men as follows,  
 Who bravely did themselves behave, full thirty thousand dollars.  
 This must their courage animate; each tar is a rich fellow,  
 And this is good encouragement for the taking Porto Bello."

So much for the honesty, and what about the roughness?

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 178.



It is here necessary to introduce a rare and improbable episode which yet gives a view of what life might be like on board a man of war before the service custom had set into its mould. Sandwiched between the impression of Rear Admiral Leake, who, "though<sup>1</sup> he took his bottle freely, yet never was disguised or impaired his health by it," and the impact of Tobias Smollett's world, we can glimpse the disciplined brutality that still was possible.

One aspect of the early Georgian naval life is thus revealed by the court martial on Captain Goodere, an officer who had murdered his elder brother, Sir John Dineley, after bringing him on board his ship the *Ruby* then lying off Bristol in King's Road. It must be explained that Captain Goodere and his brother, who had changed his name on obtaining his inheritance, had been at variance about their father's will and that an apparent reconciliation had been brought about through the good offices of Mr. Smith, a gentleman residing on College Green. The following statement forms part of the captain's confession:

"When,"<sup>2</sup> asserted Captain Goodere, "my brother and myself came out of that gentleman's house I ordered the men (members of his ship's company who had been in waiting at the sign of the White Hart on College Green) not to touch him but to dog him and see where he housed. I then went into a coffee house near the Change the better to secrete myself. Mahony (one of the seamen) came to the coffee house to tell me my brother was gone on. I thought it would be proper to seize him, there being at this time with the before-mentioned (four) persons, George Best, cockstern of the barge, and the greatest part of the barge's crew.

"They laid hold of him just as he came under St. Augustine's churchyard wall and forcibly hurried him over Captain Day's rope-walk, and so on to the hot well not far from where my barge lay. My brother than said, 'I wish Mr. Smith knew how you use me,' and called out 'murder' several times, and said his name was Sir John Dineley. But I took good care to stop his mouth to prevent his speaking, and when I had got him into the barge, I ordered my bargemen to row away.

"When we had got him aboard, I told the crew he was mad; and ordered Mr. Jones to carry candles into the purser's cabin, which I

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir John Leake*, by Stephen Martin-Leake, ed. Geoffrey Callender, Navy Records Society, vol. ii, p. 427.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in Charnock's *Biographia Navalis*, iv, p. 247-8.

had some days before caused to be cleaned for my brother's reception. I asked him (Sir John) to drink a dram, and my steward brought up a bottle of rum, but he would not drink any of it. Mr. Duggen, the surgeon, went by my order to feel his pulse, and said it was pretty regular. Sir John still kept groaning; I having first ordered Mr. Waller, the carpenter, to put two strong bolts on the cabin door.

"Between two and three o'clock I ordered Mahony to call up Charles White (for Elisha Coles, who was intended to assist Mahony in the murder, was dead drunk) and to bring him into my cabin. White came presently, and I believe I made him drink a quart of rum out of gill glasses. When he was near drunk I asked him if he would kill a Spaniard."

The party then descended to the purser's flat.

"I stood at the cabin door," Captain Goodere went on, "with my sword drawn; and gave the lanthorn, which hung up in the cabin, just as they had got the rope about his neck." Mahony and White divided Sir John's loose cash, which amounted to nearly thirty pounds. "About four o'clock they went into the yaul and got ashore, I having promised to send them tickets for three weeks or a month's absence from the ship." It was the morning of Monday, 19th January, 1741. The story illustrates the captain's power and the abiding sense of discipline. The war with Spain had broken out which accounts for the invitation to the bemused sailor. With the execution of Captain Goodere and the three seamen the spirit of murder was exorcised from that uneasy squadron.

It is well to end on a more pious note. The religious sentiment was well under way in Smollett's time. It was Commodore Hawser Trunnion who exclaimed on his deathbed, "I trust by the mercy of God, I shall be sure in port in a very few glasses, and fast moored in a most blessed riding."

By the time the war of Austrian Succession broke out in the autumn of 1740 the naval framework had stood the strain of a long peace. There had been no naval action of any consequence since Byng's victory over the Spanish fleet at Cape Passaro more than twenty years earlier. The method of promotion for officers was now regular, but Stephen Martin Leake in his life of his uncle the admiral has noted down<sup>1</sup> its clearest flaw. "The sea officer is but occasionally

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir John Leake*, ii, p. 418.

employed, and at other times on half-pay only; which, if he has not a good interest at the Admiralty Board, may be always, being forced to make fresh application to his friends every time his ship is paid off."

The workings of this "interest" were still rudimentary, but it is manifest that almost all the great flag officers possessed some initial advantage or its equivalent the early patronage of men of rank. A test case is that of Admiral Lord Hawke, a man utterly free from combinations and a fine example of rewarded merit. It is true that his family, a prosperous London merchant stock originating from Treraven in the Cornish parish of St. Cleather, had no connection with the sea, nor was his rise rapid in the early stages of his career. He did not become a post captain till 1734 when he was appointed to the *Flamborough* at the age of twenty-nine. All the same he had the support of his maternal uncle Colonel Martin Bladen, who held the Portsmouth seat and was Commissioner of Trade and Plantations, close-bound to the Walpole grouping. In 1742, when the great minister at last succumbed, Bladen is found writing<sup>1</sup> to his nephew. "There has likewise been a clean sweep of the Admiralty; but I hope I may have some friends among the new Lords of that Board that will upon my account afford you their protection." "My colleague, Mr. Cavendish," Bladen wrote later,<sup>2</sup> "has already laid in his desire for another ship for you." How could one rise who did not have assistance?

The sea officers of an earlier generation had helped forward their own kinsfolk and alliance. The families from the Thames Estuary like the Haddocks and the Wagers, who had begun as masters or gunners in naval ships or as victualling agents in Deptford or Chatham, had now passed their prime. Their influence still persisted. Thus Vice-Admiral Sir John Bentley, who was a lieutenant at this time, was a Deal man whose family was connected with old Captain Wager, the admiral's father. Rear Admiral Baker was Bentley's brother-in-law; there was a close nexus in the Cinque Port towns. At Knowlton outside Deal stood the tomb of Sir John Narbrough whose name brought back the older days of naval glory.

Many senior officers had been helped forward by the generous patronage of Sir Clowdisley Shovell. The Hardys and the Rowleys and their cousins the Martins were among the essential naval stocks. Yet by the beginning of the reign of George II a new element had

<sup>1</sup> Printed in Montagu Burrows' *Life of Edward Lord Hawke*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

entered in. To explain the position the political situation must be considered. With the death of Queen Anne in 1714 and the accession of the Elector of Hanover as George I the Tory party had been discredited. Henceforward throughout the reigns of the two first Hanoverian kings the administration was to be controlled by that great Whig grouping which had engineered and benefited by the Revolution. Like all parties which are primarily based on a community of interest the Whigs contained their rival sections, governmental and opposition. There were the men who supported Sir Robert Walpole and those who laboured to bring him down. Nevertheless there was a peculiarly static form of government in these decades and especially throughout the twenty years between 1721 and 1742 when Walpole was prime minister.

It was characteristic of this period that the flow of patronage, pensions, emoluments and offices of profit, moved in fixed channels. For the first time a naval command was considered not only as an occupation but as an endowment. Prudent parents belonging to the wide circle of the governing class now came to look upon the command of a man-of-war as the equivalent of a regiment. The long history of purchase in the Army led to the examination of naval possibilities in a spirit essentially mercenary. Such were the fruits of Georgian security and the dominance of a single political party.

An example will throw light on this development. In 1740-41 there were a number of young men aged twenty-three or twenty-four, all with the most powerful connections, among the lieutenants promoted to post rank on receiving the command of frigates. We find them shifted about among the captains' cabins of a small number of vessels used to achieve this golden rise. Lord George Graham was posted to the *Adventure*, Lord Montagu Bertie to the *Lyme*, Lord Harry Powlett to the *Port Mahon* in which he was succeeded by Lord Aylmer, and Lord Northesk to the *Bideford* in which Lord Forester took his place. They extended their friendship to their kinsmen whose young sons they shipped with them. Samuel Barrington, later the celebrated admiral, joined Lord George Graham's frigate as a child of twelve.

It was thus in no casual spirit that their parents launched these children on the naval life. There exists among the Ogilvie Papers a note of items purchased and sums disbursed by the factor of the fifth Earl of Findlater and Seafield on the occasion of the fitting out of the latter's ward the Hon. Alexander Ogilvie when he left home

in February, 1733, to join his first ship the *Dreadnought*, Captain Geddes, then lying in Spithead.

A sum of £47 19s. 1d. was expended<sup>1</sup> on the equipment and journey of this fourteen-year-old boy. He had all his ceremonial dress, the laced and satin coats, the laced hat, the wigs and the silver-hilted sword. The sword cost only £2, surely an insufficient price for such a crucial article. His silver spoon, knife and fork were put up in a case together with a dozen napkins. He brought a black silk night cap and a dozen diaper night caps. His sleeping gear was indeed extensive, mattresses, blankets, quilts and sheets and pillow cases; one wonders how his hammock bore them.

He came of an Episcopalian stock, the Ogilvies of Banff, and brought with him a "common prayer book." The technical items have real interest; a quadrant, a pair of compasses with three points, Gordon's cosmography, Euclid's Elements. A guinea was expended on "a course of navigation and astronomy with Mr. Gordon." He was well supplied with a slate and four pencils, a large clean paper book, a small ditto. We can see him standing on the Hard at Portsmouth beside his chest holding his "prospect glass."

The whole picture suggests a poise and certainty. It is interesting to note that it was from this privileged Whig background that both Edward Boscawen and George Brydges Rodney joined the Navy. The sea was now a calling that could be embraced very young with a reasonable chance of future profit. A seat in the House of Commons was often found for the wealthier men among the younger officers. Lord Vere Beauclerk had always been able to voice his needs from his place in Parliament, so had Sir Thomas Frankland. Among the seniors John Byng was member for Rochester and it was part of Admiral Mathew's undoing that he sat in the house with the opposition. Captain Hawke at forty-two was put into the Portsmouth seat, which his uncle had vacated, and then held it for almost thirty years.

Still in all this consideration of means and policies it is important not to underemphasise the pull of adventure. Suddenly after the long and dull commissions there came the experience of Commodore Anson's famous voyage in which sailing from Spithead in September, 1740, he took the *Centurion* 60 round the world. This was at the beginning of the war with Spain which Walpole had struggled to prevent. The war was a commercial one arising from the Spanish

<sup>1</sup> Details printed in the *Genealogist*, vol. xxv, pp. 264-5.

policy of excluding foreign trade from South America and the Spanish Main; but it must be seen against the background of constant competition and mercantile exacerbation which marked the relations between Great Britain and the Bourbon Crowns throughout this century.

The voyage in question was intended to synchronise with Admiral Vernon's attack on Portobello, and the conflict itself would soon merge with the war of Austrian Succession in which England would support the Empress Maria Theresa against Prussia and France. In the home country this war was notable for the Jacobite Rising under Prince Charles Edward. The operations in European waters were not remarkable; there was thus every reason for tradition to concentrate upon George Anson's voyage. In the Navy these years were best remembered for their great disaster the loss with all hands of the *Victory*, flagship of Admiral Sir John Balchen, when beating up past the Race of Alderney. This was paralleled by the death of Sir Clowdisley Shovell in the *Association* wrecked nearly forty years earlier on the Bishop and Clerk. Both were the victims of October weather in the outer Channel, the storms that broke upon the war-time fleets.

Although the character of the leaders was very different the parallel between Anson's voyage and Drake's is often close. The Spanish power, now setting, still retained a hold upon the whole volume of the Pacific trade and had strict rulings in regard to the West Indies. In peace as in war the *guarda costas* had attacked the English traders. Again, the significance of the annual sailing of the Manila galleon, the treasure ship which passed between the Philippines and the Mexican port of Acapulco, recalls in detail the arrangements made by the early viceroys of New Spain. Further the isolated nature of the expedition brings the mind back to Tudor days: it was very far removed from the interlocked strategy which was to govern the movements of the Mediterranean and Channel fleets at the close of this same century.

The actual attacks bear some resemblance to those carried out so unexpectedly by the ship's company of the *Golden Hind*. But over all these coasts there brooded a sense of worn exhaustion; it was hardly forty years before the birth of Bolivar the Liberator. Not only are the surviving accounts of the voyage most detailed but they are illustrated by the drawings which Lieutenant Piercy Brett of the *Centurion* made of the chief episodes. This element of decline in the

Spanish settlements is shown most clearly in the sketches made of the town of Payta in the north of the viceroyalty of Peru which the English crews occupied and burned. Here we are shown the small dull adobe houses of that little port of five hundred people, the crenellated convent and the church with the bells hanging in the campanile. It was the world of the Bridge of San Luis Rey and the accounts make this clear as they describe the great moulded oaken doors, the painted calicoes and hangings, the wine and glasses in the governor's house and the "large pier-glass in a fine gilt frame."

The spoiling of the town suggests a quieter eighteenth century version of Drake's actions with certain touches from the West Indian buccaneers, the whole tempered by a relaxed form of naval discipline. Thus boxes were brought on board containing gold bars to the value of sixteen thousand pounds. There were gold watches, buckles, snuff boxes and jewellery. The sailors enjoyed themselves in putting on the tie and bag-wigs and the gold and silver-laced suits. A touch which recalls Blake was Anson's decision to take into his service Michael Despeda, a freed Jamaican slave found in Payta who continued with him after his return to England.

Looked at from another angle the atmosphere of the voyage was in some ways closer to that of Captain R. F. Scott than to Drake and Magellan's century. It was undertaken by an ordered squadron and one is always conscious of the sense of naval hierarchy. The officers of the *Centurion* included, in addition to Piercy Brett, Charles Saunders, the elder Hyde Parker and Augustus Keppel, the two last-named midshipmen. Jack Byron was a midshipman in the *Wager* and Howe a lad of fourteen in the *Severn*. The expedition was freighted with future admirals.

The scene of the captains of the five vessels coming on board the *Centurion* when off Cape Virgins to take a glass of wine with the commodore links up with the late eighteenth century. One of Piercy Brett's illustrations shows the six ships entering the Straits of Le Maire just before they encountered those great Cape Horn seas whose onset would lead to the squadron parting company and to the return to England of the *Severn* and *Pearl*. One can almost feel the quietness of that autumn morning with the six ships moving through the Straits borne forward by a breeze and that strong tidal stream. The sea stretches southward in a deceptive calm; there is an oil-laden stillness under a warm and unexpected sun. From the *Centurion's* masthead the commodore's pendant drifts out bannerwise. It is not

surprising that discipline was maintained so well through every hardship.

It was, perhaps, the struggles against the elements and against disease which give a modern touch to Anson's voyage. The deaths from scurvy caused by the absence of fresh fruit and vegetables led on to the medical research to which was due the general good health of Nelson's fleets. There was an idyllic element in the voyage of the *Centurion*, an impression well conveyed by another of Brett's sketches of the resting place ashore on the island of Juan Fernandez in the Pacific. The commodore's tent is set up on a lawn between two sparkling streams surrounded by the groves of sandalwood above the green savannahs.

For the rest the duel in which the *Centurion* took the *Nuestra Senora de Cobadonga* off Cape Espiritu Santo in the Philippines had the character of an ordinary eighteenth century action between small ships of the line. During the voyage the friendship with Portugal was tested. Both in the *Centurion's* stay at Macao and in the refit of the *Severn* and *Pearl* at Rio de Janeiro the working out of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty can be traced. There was always a welcome for British ships in Portugal and the Brazils.

The visit to Macao, too, involved contacts with the viceroy of Canton. This was the first occasion on which a senior British officer had paid a visit to the Chinese mainland. It was fortunate that the commodore possessed firmness, a sense of theatre and a slightly stolid ceremonial dignity, qualities which intercourse with the Celestial Empire then exacted.

For the rest Anson's record in the Navy is that of an administrator. He was at sea for a few months in 1746-47 during which he commanded the Channel fleet and won a victory over an inferior French force; but for most of his career he was a member of the Board of Admiralty and first Lord, with one break, from 1751 until his death. He was an officer of strong political connections through his father-in-law Lord Hardwicke. He had early imbibed his views as a nephew of Macclesfield the Whig lord chancellor. He came from Staffordshire, the county which was to produce his kinsman Jervis. In later life, for he survived until 1762, he was wealthy through his prize money. He was efficient, practical, a trifle obstinate, a little immersed in the great world.

Two points in regard to his action with the Manila galleon are worth recording. Sixty-four Spaniards were killed or died of wounds



as against only three fatal British casualties. This engagement emphasised the trivial loss which was so often the good fortune of the aggressor. The value of the prize money from this ship was half a million pounds. Such a haul gave to the sea service that promise of occasional great riches which the staid and materialist conceptions of that century would require.

## *Greenwich Hospital*

IT WAS in the period of peace in which the discipline of the Navy was annealed that there had developed that setting for the naval life which almost accidentally would prove adequate to commemorate not only Anson's but still greater victories. The magnificence which in other countries was displayed in palaces became in England associated with the sea. It was across these years that there was built up that great repository of tradition set in an architecture of surpassing splendour, the Royal Naval Hospital at Greenwich. Here Nelson's body lay before its burial after the *Victory* had brought his remains back from his last battle. In a set of these rooms Byng would be confined in the weeks before he was court-martialled. Among the successive governors of the hospital were Rodney and Hood and Nelson's Hardy.

For the understanding of the late eighteenth century Navy a description of Greenwich Hospital is essential, some view of that complex of buildings which were ultimately destined to be transformed into the Royal Naval College and to include the National Maritime Museum. In England they would fill something of that place which in French Arms is taken by the Invalides.

From 1752 onwards the main block of buildings, as we know them, was complete; the domes; the colonnades; the deep quadrangular blocks of Portland stone. Between them the vista led to the balanced airy lightness of that Queen's House which Inigo Jones had built for his Stuart master. The setting had a massive grandeur, imperial in its older meaning, one of those high compositions of stone and water that Rastrelli and Cameron were to erect in the same century beside the Neva. Below the artificial park with its Spanish chestnuts and its elms and its east and west wilderness there stretched the range of buildings with the heavy pediments and the great flagstones, the whole facing northwards and terminating in that stretch of river where the Thames curves to the southward at Millwall Reach.

Opposite there lay an empty stretch of marshland, a feature which was to provide the basis of so many of those classical groupings on the grand scale which characterised the architecture of that and the

preceding age at St. Petersburg or Marly. Industrialism still coiled far ahead and its advent could not yet be detected. The thin clear sharp air came up the Estuary from the German Ocean. The rain fell on the rusticated frontages, the flags and stone walks, and on the wide grey water sliding by. Greenwich Hospital, thus conceived, was a symbol of immeasurable significance in the building up of the naval life. Between the main blocks stood the Rysbrack statue of George II sculptured out of a block of marble taken by Sir George Rooke from the French. This was an age which needed to have its high mundane purpose thus made visible. It was the apotheosis of secular glory.

Belonging profoundly to the old regime it therefore could not but be a class conception and a Whig achievement. "It is indifferent,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Nicholas Hawksmoor who was so much concerned with Greenwich, "to all workmen whether they get money by destroying or erecting fabricks." Still it was surely this great pile which nourished the first stirrings of romanticism which the chill Georgian mind was to permit. It was a natural concomitant of that phrase, which we find Lord Sandwich using, "the empire of the sea."

The actual plans had passed through many stages. The site had been first occupied by Henry VIII's old palace of Placentia and at the Revolution not only was the Queen's House in position but also a block beside the river put up by Webb for Charles II. The scheme was for a hospital for disabled seamen similar to that provided by King Charles for the soldiers at Chelsea. The reign of Queen Anne saw the erection of the greater part of the planned achievement.

The three names associated with the main building were Wren, Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor in that order. Wren's branching imagination was here curbed by the determination of Mary II that the Queen's House must be preserved. It was upon Wren's basic conception that Sir John Vanbrugh's mind began to work.

He had no wish to quarrel with his senior's dictum on a vista with colonnades that "for a portico the longer the more beautiful *ad infinitum*:" He had his own clashing and baroque effects which now alone survive in the stonework and rose-coloured brick of the east wing of the seamen's quarters. "To Vanbrugh's mind,"<sup>2</sup> writes Mr. Laurence Whistler in his study of his work, "the Hospital needed above all things that dominating centre which Queen Mary's

<sup>1</sup> *The Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, 1694-1728*, Wren Society, vol. vii, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Sir John Vanbrugh*, by Laurence Whistler, p. 74-5.

decision had denied it. At the end of the colonnades he proposed to throw out an immense elliptical courtyard leading to a portico ninety feet high and so to a chapel with a dome two-thirds as big as St. Paul's yet entirely concealed behind a strange pyramid of orders." There were to be towers two hundred feet high.

From such fecundity Greenwich was saved by common sense and by a load of debt. It was after all a hospital containing in 1708 three hundred poor and disabled seamen for whose maintenance an income of six thousand pounds was provided. They were not interested in the domes and peristyles. "In the tympanum is a piece of sculpture representing fortitude and the dominion of the sea." The *George* tavern in Crane Street and the *Ship* in Fisher Lane were of more concern to them as they came out of the Chalk Walk and stumped out in the damp air with their hooks and wooden legs. The great building rose above them with its domes and pedestals and "Ripley's saddle." The intricate and complex pile at Greenwich was a tribute to the nation's sea service expressed in terms of grandeur. In no way utilitarian, it served to emphasise a secular magnificence; it was pure monument.

The whole range of Greenwich Hospital centres upon the Painted Hall. This was originally designed as a dining-hall for the pensioners, but when they became too numerous it was unoccupied and served for mainly ceremonial purposes. Placed in King William's building it had been completed in 1704, but the decoration gives the interior an early Georgian character. The ceilings and walls were painted by Thornhill between 1708 and 1727. It has the sober grandeur which befitted the Hanoverian Kings, the hall, the lovely entrance steps, the dais, the allegorical figures high and dominant in brown and grey.

There was something in its dignified high mundane assertion which recalls the period that was heir to the practical sagacity of John Duke of Marlborough. The arch above the dais carried the royal arms of William III supported by Mars and Mercury. Once a year on 13th November, when the river mists would wreath the buildings and lie along the "Plymouth Moor stone" water steps, the pensioners assembled to commemorate the landing of their founder at Torbay. We can see in Greenwich the emblem of the most lasting of worldly triumphs, an epitome of the early eighteenth century spirit which was so fresh and material. It has the assurance which came in with that quiet era. Heartily and with strong self-reliance

the governor, always an admiral of high rank with his gold lace and his great deep satin cuffs, the officers and the serried rows of pensioners would drink the loyal toast which still brings back the King's "immortal memory."

The sequestered Derwentwater estates and the small fortune of Captain Kidd, who had suffered for piracy, were alike granted to maintain the new establishment. The north country agricultural lands and mineral rights of the properties of the Jacobite Earl of Derwentwater would produce a yield of twenty thousand pounds in the reign of George III. The number of pensioners would increase to two thousand by the time of the outbreak of the war which cost the colonies in North America. One hundred and forty boys, the sons of seamen, would be bred up there in the rooms with "mapps, charts, models of ships." The chapel in its original form arose to balance the Painted Hall. Colyn Campbell laboured to complete the buildings with conceptions of a more Palladian character. By 1752 the whole was ready; the seamen in the Chalk Walk discussed old battles. Their wards were named from ships which in most cases dated from the Stuart naval world, *Orford*, *Katharine*, *Restoration*, *Neptune*, *Royal Escape*, *Soldados*, *Greyhound*, *Crown*.

Under one aspect Greenwich Hospital reflects the naval life of that period. It was a time of unalterable precedent and of the carrying out of diplomatic duties by flag officers. The influence of the Fighting Instructions lay on the Navy together with that doctrine of the maintenance of the line of battle, which as Père Hoste said in reference to King James II, "we owe to His Britannic Majesty." In regard to the other matter the career of Admiral Mathew, who combined the post of commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean with that of minister to the Sardinian King and the States of Italy, is a case in point.

The absence of new life or of any urgent efficiency is very striking. Thus the West Indies squadrons were again and again decimated by yellow fever, as in the case of all those officers and men who died in 1727 off the *Bastimentos*. Even the general public became familiar with the ballad of Admiral Hosier's ghost. In general the admirals had been careened too long. The leading flag officers were for the most part old, vociferous and mutually antagonistic. Wager had inherited from Torrington the claims of a determined placeman; he

adhered with wisdom to the strict Whig doctrine and heeded to Sir Robert Walpole's managers. Norris was in command of the Channel fleet during the war of Austrian Succession when over eighty.

A rudimentary blockade was instituted in this war and the indecisive battle of Toulon fought by the Mediterranean fleet under Admiral Mathew resulted from the French ships leaving harbour. This was an action in which the failure of co-operation between the British flag officers was lamentable. The engagements in this conflict were perhaps primarily important as a seed-ground for the future since the triumphs of the Seven Years' war were prepared in anger and heart-burning on the quarterdecks of line-of-battleships in the botched actions. It was relatively junior officers like Captains Hawke and Boscawen whose high talent was annealed in disappointment through these trying years. An element of indecision marked the handling of great fleets.

At the same time the political situation suffered some deterioration. It is seldom noted that a change had come over the domestic ministerial scene since Walpole's fall. The jealousies had now flared out and all the bitter rivalries. The feuds between flag officers afloat and those between post captains and their seniors had led on to recrimination. Men who had been cashiered after court-martial sensed a political motive in their punishment. We have here the interaction of naval command at sea and membership of the House of Commons.

This period culminated in the execution of Torrington's son, Admiral John Byng, a tragedy which can only be understood against the complex detail of cabinet politics. The age of reason, worldly wise and rather mercenary, had passed away with the deaths of Walpole and Queen Caroline. An intimate close hatred bound the interlocking groups around King George II in his later years.

Mr. Brian Tunstall has made a careful study of the Byng affair both in his biography of the admiral and in his introduction to the Navy Records Society volume on the loss of Minorca. It is worth recounting certain points. Byng had become a post captain in 1727 at the age of twenty-three and was continuously employed in this rank until he became rear-admiral of the Blue in 1745. He was among the officers who sat on the courts-martial on Admirals Mathew and Lestock which followed on the battle of Toulon. Even in the hours of his own action his mind dwelt upon the former officer's "misfortune." Byng was neither popular nor especially

able; he is described as "austere and rigid almost to a degree of undue oppression."

In 1756, being now admiral of the Blue, he was offered the command in the Mediterranean. Byng was detached and strangely sceptical. His requests were reasonable, for a hospital ship and a repeating frigate, his mood defeatist. As a writer of dispatches he was prolix, incautious and unconfiding. His duty was to prevent a French attack on the naval fortress of Port Mahon. A quotation<sup>1</sup> will draw attention to the nature of his approach. "I shall use," he explained, "every endeavour to frustrate the designs of the enemy, if they should make an attempt on the island of Minorca, knowing the great importance of that island to the Crown of Great Britain, and shall think myself most fortunate if I am so happy to succeed in this undertaking." It is clear that he was equally remote from either hopefulness or gusto.

The action which ultimately cost Byng his life took place on 20th May, 1756. The British were at this time lying off Minorca while the French fleet had come down from Toulon to support their own land attack upon the island. The admiral is described as very much at his ease in his blue coat pacing the quarterdeck of the *Ramillies* and carrying a copy of the "Fighting Instructions." Certain axioms seem to have been present to his poised lethargic mind. He must preserve his line of battle and must justify each signal by the "Instructions." An exchange of views, recorded<sup>2</sup> at the subsequent court-martial, sets the tone. The admiral's secretary seeing his superior persuing article xvii "took the liberty of observing that agreeable to that article the fleet should tack." Byng answered "that he would stand rather beyond their rear before he tacked," since he was anxious to suffer as little damage aloft as possible. The action proved inconclusive and, after sheltering himself behind the findings of a council of war, Byng returned to Gibraltar. The British garrison in Minorca surrendered; the admiral was superseded by Edward Hawke and brought home under arrest.

The penalty for neglect of duty in face of the enemy was death and, after court-martial, this was exacted. George II was adamant as were the members of the administration in power when Byng went out. There was indignation at the loss of Minorca both among

<sup>1</sup> Printed in Tunstall, *Life of Byng*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

the electorate and in the city; it was clear to the politicians affected that this indignation must be allayed. Byng in his last days remarked, "I think it has become an affair entirely political." There seems no adequate reason for the King's refusal to exercise the prerogative of mercy; the whole tragic story was the prelude to great changes in the naval world. There were new ideas developing on the use of the material of the Navy even during those long dull months when Byng was confined under arrest in Greenwich Hospital.

As Sir Julian Corbett has remarked in his study of the rôle of England in the Seven Years' war, "we can see growing up a clearer analysis of the various services required, a germ of their classification into battle scouting and inshore work." There was certainly a radical change in the functions of the different types of warships.

In this connection Charnock, the historian of naval architecture, has ascribed the large number of fifty-gun ships, seventy in all at this date, to a rather confused wish to combine battle and commerce protection properties in a single vessel. From this decade, in some respects so unremarkable, can be traced the dawn of specialisation and in these years we can discover the cardinal types of Nelson's fleets, the seventy-fours and the fast-sailing frigates. The perfection of the latter category was achieved with singular rapidity. Sir Thomas Slade, who was Surveyor of the Navy from 1753 until 1771, constructed the first thirty-two gun frigates, a class of thirty. One of their principal features was the absence of guns on the lower deck.

In the wars of the last quarter of the eighteenth century the frigate type was standardised. There would be very little difference in construction between the *Arethusa* which fought the *Belle Poule* and the *Shannon* which was to take the *Chesapeake*. Only the addition of the carronade and the practice of coppering the ship's bottoms, which became universal after 1780, marked the change between the last fine frigates and Sir Thomas Slade's. Rear-Admiral Kempenfelt in one of his illuminating letters describes his preference for thirty-eight gun single-decked frigates over the old-fashioned forty gun two-decked style. "When the two-decker is put by her lower tier,"<sup>1</sup> he writes in describing a situation in which the guns on the lower deck could not be worked, "she is deprived of the greatest part of her force, whilst the single-decker retains the whole of hers. The single-decker, having a deep waist with broad gang boards, her men

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 11th November, 1780, *Letters of Lord Barham*, vol. i, p. 336.



will be as much secured from the small-shot of the enemy as the men on the lower tier of the two-decker. The single-decker will have the advantage of having all her men upon deck, ready to board or to oppose boarding. The two-decker will be something loftier, therefore less weatherly."

The genesis of the seventy-four also dates from this period. In this case the responsibility for the great improvement clearly rests with Anson, who also has the credit of sheathing the *Alarm* with copper, the first instance of this innovation, in 1761. A class of fifteen hundred ton line-of-battleships, the seventy-fours, and another new class of twelve hundred ton ships, the sixty-fours, were now constructed. This change involved the scrapping of a building policy for ships of seventy and sixty guns. No sixty-gun ship was laid down after the launching of the *Rippon* in 1758.

Meanwhile the French and Spanish ships were studied in detail after their capture and this resulted in several improvements. "The first attempt,"<sup>1</sup> writes John Charnock, "towards emancipation from the former servitude was the construction of the *Royal George*, a ship at that time deemed the paragon of beauty, and considered as the *ne plus ultra* of perfection in the science of marine architecture." It was a consequence of these decisions that the three-decker fleet flagship type was confined to the two highest rates and that three-deckers with less than ninety guns were no longer built. There is here the germ of the fleet flagship with its special complement.

Certain further changes can be noted. The use of the steering wheel was by this time universal. Chain pumps were introduced in 1764, and eight years later the Admiralty would direct that all ships should be fitted with a still. Lightning conductors were supplied to ships, at Anson's instance, soon after 1762. As a minor change the lighter windows were from 1757 housed in the lower frame like carriage windows. A great similarity of appearance now came to mark each line-of-battleship. Mr. Carr Laughton has noted<sup>2</sup> that the *Santissima Trinidad* of 1769 was hardly distinguishable from an English ship save by having the quarter galleries open to the stern."

Figureheads had reached that form with which we are most familiar. From 1750 they were often carved from pine or other soft woods instead of oak. Fancy figureheads had now for some

<sup>1</sup> *History of Marine Architecture*, vol. iii, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Carr Laughton, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

twenty years begun to appear in sixth rates and sloops. The convention of the double equestrian statue as seen in Balchen's *Victory* and the *Royal George* was fading out. In 1765 only the figure-heads of first and second rates were allowed supporters. Six years later ships' names were painted in for the first time. These brief notes can conclude with an account of the Admiralty specifications<sup>1</sup> for the figurehead of the *Queen Charlotte* considered the most handsome that was ever placed into a ship. "In the head is Her Majesty in her robes with the orb and sceptre in her hands: standing erect under a canopy with two doves thereon. On the starboard side is Britannia sitting on a lion and presenting a laurel; on the larboard side is Plenty sitting on a sea horse offering the produce of the sea and land."

This period reveals a deepening concern for naval matters from many angles. Harrison's chronometer was completed in 1761 and Hadley's quadrant had been in use for a quarter of a century. An Act of 1746 ordered that sails should be woven in Great Britain. The coasts were now more clearly charted. Smeaton's lighthouse on the Eddystone replaced Rudyard's wooden tower burned down in 1755. The Skerries lighthouse had been erected in 1730, the year before the first moored lightship on the English coast was placed at the Nore Sand. Lightships were being moored in the different channels; the *Nautical Almanac* was now compiled. Boscawen introduced new methods of ventilation between decks. Howe in the *Magnanime* brought in the practice of giving leave watch by watch to the ship's company. Hawke wrote in 1756 that "good beer is the best preservative of health among newly-raised men." The scene was set for the great battle.

The new era may be held to open with that victory of Quiberon Bay which Mahan regarded as the real forerunner of Trafalgar. Boscawen's action off Lagos, which took place in the same year, had something of its quality, but Hawke's battle bore no resemblance to those careful planned engagements which had been the outcome of the old-fashioned naval training. The threat of invasion, which was now present, had led to that close blockade of the French coast which dates from the second half of the Seven Years' war. It was a policy initiated by Admiral Hawke, later disliked by Howe and later still

<sup>1</sup> Printed *ibid.*, p. 81.

favoured by Collingwood and Nelson. The attack on Conflans' fleet among the shoals of Quiberon Bay in southern Brittany was the first instance of the *decisive* battle of which the end of the century was to see such fine examples.

Hawke was now in command of a Channel fleet which was recognisably the predecessor of those which Keppel, Howe, Cornwallis and St. Vincent would in time lead. At the period of the engagement this fleet consisted of twenty-three line-of-battleships which were supported by ten frigates, the latter operating under Commodore Duff. Hawke was provided with only one other flag officer, Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Hardy, who would command the Channel fleet in the next war; Commodore Young wore his broad pendant in the *Mars*. All the other vessels of the fleet were private ships.

The captains of the line-of-battleships included many of the admirals of the war of American Independence, Keppel in the *Torbay*, Samuel Graves in the *Duke*, James Gambier in the *Burford*, Digby in the *Dunkirk*, Howe in the *Magnanime*. There was a considerable variation in their ages. Digby, a nephew of the Paymaster-General Henry Fox, was twenty-seven and the youngest; some on the other hand were very senior, and Sir John Bentley of the *Warspite* was approaching sixty.

Among the frigate captains were Marriot Arbuthnot, who is remembered for his action off the Chesapeake, Francis Samuel Drake, the third in command at the battle of the Saints, and Alexander Hood. These names are worth noting for they are those of future admirals who from their own quarterdecks now observed the most daring action before Nelson's days. Quiberon Bay is essentially a record of the taking of risks which seamanship would justify.

The French fleet had left Brest, while Hawke's ships were in Torbay, and had sailed for Quiberon on the southern shore of Brittany. The expeditionary force which the French under Conflans were to convoy was lying in that open anchorage. The enemy was first sighted by the *Maidstone* frigate at half-past eight in the morning of November 20th. The island of Belleisle which lies athwart that segment of the hard Breton coast soon became visible from the mastheads of the British line-of-battleships as they plunged eastwards.

"All the day," so runs<sup>1</sup> Admiral Hawke's dispatch to the Admiralty; "we had very fresh gales at N.W. and N.N.W. with heavy

<sup>1</sup> The dispatch is printed in Burrows' *Life of Lord Hawke*, pp. 221-3.

squalls. Monsieur Conflans kept going off under such sail as all his squadrons could carry and at the same time keep together, while we crowded after him with every sail our ships could bear." The signal for engaging the enemy was made at half-past two; the British ships had come up very swiftly. They made good use of the hours which still remained before darkness.

The first results came just after four o'clock when the light of the autumn afternoon would soon be failing. At that hour the French ship *Formidable* struck her colours after being engaged by the *Resolution* and receiving broadsides from the other ships which passed her. Shortly afterwards the *Superbe* foundered. She had sustained grave damage from the fire of the line-of-battleships ranging by. The third victim was the *Thésée* attacked successively by the *Magnanime* and *Torbay*. Fighting her lower deck guns in the stormy weather, she capsized and sank.

The admiral describes the close of this fierce action. "Night was now come, and being on a part of the coast, among islands and shoals, of which we were totally ignorant, without a pilot, as was the greatest part of the squadron, and blowing hard on a lee shore, I made the signal to anchor." The flagship *Royal George* "came-to in fifteen fathoms water, the island of Dumet bearing E. by N. between two and three miles, the Cardinals W.  $\frac{1}{2}$ -S. and the steeples of Crozie, S.E., as we found next morning."

All through the night they heard distress guns fired and day revealed the wreckage on that iron coast. The *Héros* and the French flagship *Soleil Royal* were burned as they lay ashore, and the *Juste* was also stranded. The first light showed the *Resolution* dismasted on the Four Bank, and during that stormy forenoon the *Essex* was cast away trying to aid her. In this connection Hawke makes his comment. "About fourscore of the *Resolution's* company, in spite of the strongest remonstrance of their captain, made rafts, and with several French prisoners belonging to the *Formidable*, put off, and I am afraid drove out to sea."

The main body of the French crept into the mouth of the Vilaine, while some ships under the Prince de Beauffremont-Listenois made south for Rochefort; they were paralysed as a fighting force. Two other glimpses of the operation are worth recording. The Rev. Robert English, a naval chaplain, records<sup>1</sup> a brief episode which took place shortly after four o'clock on the day of battle. "Sir Edward

<sup>1</sup> Printed in Burrows' *Life of Hawke*, p. 234.

Hawke gave orders to his master to carry him close alongside of M. Conflans in the *Soleil Royal*. The French admiral seemed to have the same ambition on his part and it was a glorious sight to behold the blue and white flags both at the maintopmasthead bearing down on one another."

Away to the westward Vice-Admiral Saunders was approaching from Canada with a convoy. On board the flagship *Somerset* 64, Captain Edward Hughes, an officer who would be Suffren's opponent in eastern waters, was Brigadier George Townshend, some of whose letters are preserved at St. Michael's Mount. Writing to his wife, Lady Ferrers, he describes<sup>1</sup> the reception of the news that the French fleet was out of Brest. So far they had had an ordinary rough east-bound passage. The brigadier had been careful to take but little wine; he had breakfasted on honey with a few soap pills twice a week to cure the gravel. "We walk commonly ten miles a day on the deck." He explained that the admiral could "stay out but a very short time for his ships are victualled very short. This morning we have fallen in with the *Juno* which has brought the admiral dispatches by which I find that we are going this instant to join Sir Edward Hawke in search of the French fleet, supposed at Quiberon." When he heard that the battle was over Vice-Admiral Saunders turned away again.

In Mr. English's account there is a curious note that throws a light upon the then frequently exacerbated state of naval feeling. "Sir Edward has been very liberal in his praises without a single imputation to cast a shade upon the triumph of the day." The closing sentences of Hawke's dispatch are memorable. "When," wrote the admiral, "I consider the season of the year, the hard gales on the day of action, a flying enemy, the shortness of the day, and the coast they were on, I can boldly affirm that all that could possibly be done has been done. As to the loss we have sustained, let it be placed to the account of the necessity I was under of running all risks to break this strong force of the enemy."

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated on board the *Somerset*, 18th November, 1759.





LORD GEORGE GRAHAM IN HIS CABIN  
*by William Hogarth*

## *Sandwich and Kempenfelt*

IT IS remarkable how very closely the great victories of navies under sail are pressed together. Only forty-six years separate Quiberon Bay from Trafalgar. The young sailors who took part in the first decisive victory would be living in the English seaport towns when Nelson led his squadrons to the last conflict between great sailing fleets. These years cover the period during which the threat of invasion of England from France could be considered actual. A frontal attack was meditated both during the Seven Years' war and when Napoleon gathered the *Grande Armée* above Boulogne. Still a successful sea-borne landing would necessitate that brief command of the Channel which the French could never gain.

The period is clearly divided into two sections, the over-tranquil years between the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which concluded the war in 1763, and the entry of Louis XVI into the conflict beside the revolted colonies in North America in 1778, and the era of the great Channel fleets. Except during the second period of peace from 1783 until the outbreak of the next war ten years later, it was necessary to maintain large naval armaments based on Spithead, Plymouth or Torbay.

The first portion of this time represented the longest period of peace with France which the Navy would experience between the fall of Walpole and the destruction of Napoleon's power at Waterloo. This coincided with an extremely disturbed period in internal politics, those years in which George III, who had succeeded his grandfather George II in 1760, first with different prime ministers and finally with Lord North, endeavoured to build a real political power for the British Crown. It is worth considering the reaction of key flag officers to this new policy and to that first Lord of the Admiralty who was its embodiment.

The Navy of the last pre-Nelson era was dominated by a group of admirals who were close contemporaries. A very few years difference in age separated the men who formed the generations under whom the Navy of the wars of the French Revolution learned its seamanship. Such admirals all came from the central Hanoverian



period. From their youth they had known that Jacobitism was dead after the fever of the '45. It was the maritime ambitions of the Bourbon Crowns that were always present to their minds. They were conscious, as their predecessors had not been, of the ties which bound them to the other members of their great profession. They had been inured all their lives to the conception of the Royal Navy and had seen the senior service grow wildly popular with the nation in the year of Quiberon.

At the time of that battle these future flag officers were all men between thirty and forty years of age. In consequence they were between fifty and sixty when the war of American Independence extended to include the French allies of the United States. Rodney was born in 1719 and Kempenfelt a year earlier, Hughes in 1720, Peter Parker in 1721, Byron and Palliser in 1723, Samuel Hood in 1724, Keppel in 1725, Howe and Barham in 1726, Alexander Hood in 1727, and Barrington in 1729.

Two men in this list belong to a new type and act as it were as a touchstone for all the rest, Kempenfelt and Hood. With them we come to the complete shedding of the amateur and to an *absorption* in the Service which can, perhaps, hardly be traced to an earlier period. A keen high technical efficiency was combined in both cases with a crisp impatience with their brother admirals and a power of commentary which could be acrid. One senses that they had a certain loneliness in the Service; but it was the loneliness of Sir John Fisher.

Both Kempenfelt and Hood had the same confidante, the comptroller of the Navy, Sir Charles Middleton, later Lord Barham. It is, indeed, from the great mass of the Barham Papers that we best know their minds. They who esteemed so few had at any rate a distant esteem for one another. "Mr. Curgenvén,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Kempenfelt of a young lieutenant, "should consider himself quite happy to go out with Sir Samuel Hood." They shared, too, another quality; they were ready to accept promotion from all comers; they had that distaste for "politics" which Nelson was to learn from Hood, his master.

This distaste has its own importance since the last period of peace and indeed the first three years of war were deeply affected by the controversial figure of the first Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Sandwich. A form of tension developed which was not wholly

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Lord Barham*, Navy Records Society, vol. i, p. 334.

relieved until he had left office. The matter is obscure and the various developments hard to assess. In the complications of the time we may be guided by the solid keen reactions of Richard Kempenfelt.

This officer's whole outlook was affected by the fact that he had risen without "influence" and that in consequence promotion had come to him very slowly. By birth a Londoner, the son of a Swedish father and an English mother, he had served under Vernon at Portobello; but he had not reached post rank until he was thirty-nine, when he saw service in the West Indies and at Manila. At the time that his printed correspondence opens he had twenty years seniority in his rank and was serving as captain of the fleet with Sir Charles Hardy. He continued in this post with Hardy's two successors as commander-in-chief of the Channel fleet, Sir Francis Geary and George Darby. There was in Kempenfelt a clear detachment. This comes out in his statement<sup>1</sup> that in regard to the new system of signalling it was necessary "to adopt Lord Howe's mode, he being a popular character." The phrase certainly suggests a very faint appreciation of all the honeycombing naval sets. There is, perhaps, no better way of gaining a picture of the Navy in the early reign of George III than by a consideration of Kempenfelt's tart and quick phrases.

In the first place he had a keen concern for discipline. "Men must be constantly employed<sup>2</sup> to keep them orderly." He foresaw that organisation by the smaller unit which was in time to progress so far. "The only way<sup>3</sup> to keep large bodies of men in order is by dividing and subdividing them, with officers over each to inspect into and regulate their conduct, to discipline and form them."

Kempenfelt had his views on training. "I am certain that<sup>4</sup> young landmen, with proper attention, may in three months, if half that time at sea, be made to know every rope in the ship, to knot and splice, hand and reef, and be perfect at the management of cannon and small-arms." He could be generous in his appreciations as witness this account<sup>5</sup> of the handling of the French frigates in the Channel. "When their signals were at any time thrown out to make sail, they were in an instant under a cloud of canvas; when they returned to their admiral, or were called to him, they ran close up to his stern with all sail set. If a ship was but at a small distance, if called to the admiral, she immediately spread all her sails even to

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 341.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 306.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 311.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 311.

stern (stun?) sails if they would draw. This appears to be not only seamanship, but the brilliancy of it."

Attention was concentrated on the sailing qualities. "But fire-ships should sail well,<sup>1</sup> or they retard a fleet." Again, "neither the *Alexander* nor *Alfred* (new seventy-fours) promise<sup>2</sup> to be good ships, they neither sail nor carry sail." And then we reach the exposition of his doctrine. "We don't seem,"<sup>3</sup> wrote Kempenfelt from the *Victory* then lying in Spithead, "to have considered sufficiently a certain fact, that the comparative force of two fleets depends much upon their sailing. The fleet that sails fastest can engage or not as they please, and so have it always in their power to choose the favourable opportunity to attack. I think I may safely hazard an opinion that twenty-five sail of the line, coppered, would be sufficient to hazard and tease this great unwieldy combined armada." Thus spoke the tired captain of the fleet and it is worth examining the position in which he found himself.

Among the well-documented passages of general naval history there are few so difficult to interpret as Lord Sandwich's tenure of the Admiralty. The successive crises are not adequately explained by Sandwich's unpopularity as a politician. Ever since he had persecuted John Wilkes, who had been his boon companion, the name of "Jemmy Twitcher" stuck to him. He was a man destined to go down in a pamphlet war; still he had assets. He held the office of first Lord from 1771 until the fall of the North administration in 1782; eleven years is a long unbroken period in that great post. He was not inexperienced for he had been a member of the Board at intervals since 1744, and twice its head. His knowledge had been gained from Anson under whom his brother William Montagu had served as a captain in the action off Finisterre.

With Anson he had dealt successfully. Sir John Barrow's biography of the admiral makes this clear.<sup>4</sup> "No one could be more devoted to another than Lord Sandwich was to Lord Anson. He was to him a Maecenas in more than naval matters." For his own part he had the ease of the great world which Chesterfield had taught to him; he could draw the admiral out on his few subjects, admiring Anson's Moore Park apricots, his temple of the winds, his new plantations. Sandwich's own taste was for the classic. The celebrated portrait at Greenwich shows him with his dead-white face above the flowered elaborate surcoat, the almost jaunty bearing, the jutting

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 297.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 302.    <sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 297.    <sup>4</sup> *Life of Lord Anson*, p. 412.

chin. A great urn stands behind him and away below its lines there flows a river landscape.

All this explains the comment which Horace Walpole made<sup>1</sup> in the fourth volume of his *Memoirs*. "His (Sandwich's) passion for maritime affairs, his activity, industry and flowing complaisance endeared him to the profession." It is interesting that the very reverse was the truth. This cordial generous bounty, the quiet sophisticated ease was just exactly what the old oaken admirals could never stand.

It was possibly the strong social ties which bound leading flag officers to the Whig opposition which made the situation so acutely difficult. Keppel, with all his charm, was so close in to them; his sister was married to the Duke of Bedford's heir. Together with Admiral Saunders he was a party to their inner councils. We have seen that forty years earlier some of the great families of Whig politics had chosen the Navy as a profession for their younger sons. The consequences of this choice were at length brought home to the Board of Admiralty.

Further, the party of the King's Friends, which symbolised the political aspirations of George III, had very little following in naval circles. They were a civilian grouping created by "contact men" of influence depending on local and Bedchamber politics. Rodney was, perhaps, the great admiral who had most in common with them. Sandwich had the very type of the mentality of the King's Friends.

The old ties of service to a party were now replaced by an allegiance which was personal in its character. It was perhaps this last element which caused disquiet. Admiral Sir Edward Hawke, the victor of Quiberon, had been Sandwich's predecessor. It is worth noting that he had been undermined. But it was not only the enemies thus created which made the position difficult, for Sandwich also failed to satisfy the men who turned to him. Thus Rodney was chagrined by the first Lord's refusal to allow him to retain the governorship of Greenwich Hospital while he held a sea command.

Again, it was only the rare subordinate who could use the subacid honeyed style which Sandwich favoured. "You have ever thought<sup>2</sup> your own tact superior to the wishes and advice of those who love you." He had, too, his French side. The feeling for the gaming tables, which Rodney shared with him, belongs to the world of *Louis Quinze*. He was devoted to his mistress Martha Ray, whom

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, iv, pp. 170-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Sandwich Papers*, i, p. 8.

his flatterers called "Mademoiselle"; he surrounded her with pet dogs and parrots. It was politics behind the Chinese screen. Sandwich's world was far removed from that of naval officers.

All the same these factors, some trivial enough, do not explain the bitter feud which broke upon the Navy in these years. The attitude of certain Whig elements to the war of American Independence had its importance for this was the only great conflict opposed by a serious English political party. It seems that the old high Whigs could not conceive why Sandwich should appoint their ally Keppel to command the Channel fleet unless he was to be used as a scapegoat.

The whole opposition to the first Lord, however, turned on his next appointment and what resulted from it. Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser, one of the Lords of the Admiralty, was selected as third in command of Keppel's fleet while retaining his seat on the Board. It is worth pausing a little on the ensuing quarrel not only for its bearing on the outlook of Kempenfelt and Hood but because its effects for so long scarred the Royal Navy. In the first place it was set against the background of a great naval concentration. By 1779 the fleet assembled at Spithead would number forty-six line-of-battleships with more than twenty attendant frigates. Even in the previous summer there were thirty capital ships, a sufficient auditorium for the great dispute.

The indecisive action between the French and British fleets, known as the Battle of Ushant, which took place on 27th July, 1778, was only significant for its consequences on British naval discipline. No ships changed hands or were lost and the fatal casualties on both sides amounted to rather under three hundred men. The facts of the engagement can easily be compressed for it was only their results which were of interest. The French admiral, d'Orvilliers, who had been ordered to sea, had the liberty to avoid decisive action. After the first exchange on opposite tacks Vice-Admiral Palliser failed to obey the commander-in-chief's signal ordering him to close and it became necessary to signal to each of the ships of the vice-admiral's division to rejoin the fleet independently. It was Palliser's contention that the foremast of his flagship was severely damaged. After the return to Spithead certain news sheets stated that the failure to bring the French to action was due to Palliser. Keppel, approached rudely by the vice-admiral, refused to write to contradict these statements. Palliser then applied to the Admiralty, of whose Board he was a member, for a court-martial on Augustus Keppel.

Put thus simply this was indefensible, but it seems to have been a move against the old Whig core by one who had been long exacerbated. Hugh Palliser was a Yorkshireman; he was not a member of Parliament and the imputation of "vehement Toryism" seems hard to sustain. The introduction to the Sandwich Papers perhaps rather overstates his lack of naval influence. He entered the Navy under the patronage of his uncle, Stephen Nicholas Robinson. It is true that he reached flag rank late, but he was almost continually in employment. When Sandwich became first Lord he was Comptroller of the Navy, a post in which he was succeeded by Captain Maurice Suckling, Nelson's uncle. On Suckling's death this appointment went to Captain Middleton; such was Hugh Palliser's official world.

One has the impression that the vice-admiral was not at ease and that he would remain strangely immune from service feeling. He had his secretive side and was unmarried and devoted to his natural son. Admiral Hotham records<sup>1</sup> a statement made by the second Duke of Northumberland to Captain Lambert that Sir Hugh Palliser "whatever he was in later years was also formerly a Roman Catholic." He was certainly a man who served the Board of Admiralty.

The accusations brought against Admiral Keppel by Palliser, who was the prosecutor, were singularly detailed. He was charged with not marshalling his fleet, going into the fight in an unofficerlike manner, scandalous haste in quitting, running away, and not pursuing the flying enemy. Each one of these was a capital charge. Why can they have been brought?

The most probable explanation would seem to be that Palliser was infuriated by the pamphlets attacking his own reputation and felt that a minute inquiry would reveal some point which the superior, who would not protect him, could not answer. Keppel would get himself entangled in trying to work free from one or other of these many charges. First on board the *Britannia* and then for five weeks in the winter of 1779 in the governor's house at Portsmouth the court traversed these questions.

It was early clear that there was no marked conflict in the evidence whether called for the prosecution or by the defence. It was very generally conceded that if the admiral had waited to form his fleet in line he could not have brought the enemy to action, that

<sup>1</sup> *Private Papers of Sir William Hotham*, ii, p. 311.

his standing towards the south was a judicious manœuvre and that any chase on the morning of the 28th would certainly have been unavailing. The court-martial pronounced the charges to be malicious and ill-founded.

It was now Palliser's turn to be court-martialled and he was acquitted with a rider that he should have informed the commander-in-chief of the damaged condition of his own flagship the *Formidable*. Enthusiasm gave rise to all the licensed houses being renamed the "Keppel's Head." Few demonstrations against any government have been so well arranged, and for once a naval question was discussed in every Georgian parlour. Palliser was solaced with the governorship of Greenwich Hospital. Keppel resigned and a number of flag officers refused to accept commands from Sandwich's Board. These included Vice-Admiral Lord Bristol and Keppel's close friend, Samuel Barrington.

Two captains, the most distinguished in that fleet, took a notable part with the Whig admiral, John Jervis of the *Foudroyant* and Adam Duncan. This "opposition" strain was to affect the naval life for many years. The Keppel affair goes far to explain a phenomenon of the great French wars, the political bitterness which haunted Jervis. Hotham's comment<sup>1</sup> on Barrington could be made with equal truth of several Whig flag officers. "He (Sir Samuel Barrington) had great reason to be dissatisfied with Lord Sandwich's administration, and from this perhaps, in a great measure, contracted the habit of animadverting with unnecessary severity upon whatever was done at the Board of Admiralty." This will pave a way for the consideration of those admirals who were the Board's true servants.

The chief names that occur in this connection are Richard Kempenfelt and the brothers Samuel and Alexander Hood who were all promoted to the rank of rear-admiral by the administration in 1780. The circumstances, recalled above, throw light upon the acerbity that went, especially in Kempenfelt and Samuel Hood, with these men's high farseeing competence.

The first matter on which they exercised their pens was the paralysis which ensued in the fleet in consequence of the Keppel strife. These men could see the trials ahead of them. From Kempenfelt, now appointed as captain of the fleet to the *Victory* lying in Spithead, we have a view of the two flag officers who were drawn

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 222.

from retirement to command in succession the fleet which Keppel left. In these distracted letters<sup>1</sup> we can glimpse Sir Charles Hardy. "An odd obstinacy and way of negating everything proposed makes all advice useless. It is with the greatest difficulty I can prevail on him to manœuvre the fleet, he is always (so) impatient and in such a hurry to get to the eastward, to the northward, to the southward, that he won't lose time to form a line."

Mr. Benjamin Thompson, a young scientist borne in the flagship to make experiments, reinforces<sup>2</sup> this picture of ageing, tired procrastination. "He often gives way to my little wishes. If I want a cutter to go a-cruising in, or to take a sail for my diversion, he always grants my request with a smile, and he trusts his young son, who he is distractedly fond of, to my care. In short, he refuses me nothing but leave to quit the *Victory*."

In the following May Admiral Sir Charles Hardy succumbed to a fatal apoplectic stroke and his death vacated the Channel command, the Portsmouth seat and the governorship of Greenwich Hospital. He was succeeded in the first of these appointments by Admiral Sir Francis Geary, an officer who was considerably his senior in age. "The present person,"<sup>3</sup> wrote Kempenfelt to the comptroller of the Navy in describing his second chief, "is brave, generous and may, perhaps, have been a good officer, but he is wholly debilitated in his faculties, his memory and judgment lost, wavering and indetermined in everything." In 1780 he, too, resigned.

After his promotion to flag rank, Rear-Admiral Kempenfelt continued to serve in the Channel fleet. He survived the operations in the West Indies, the battle of the Saints' Passage and the end of Lord Sandwich's administration. Towards the end of August, 1782, when the war was near its end, his flagship the *Royal George* foundered in Spithead. The rear-admiral was on board in his cabin and was drowned in her. He is a somewhat isolated figure and it is clear that he ardently desired an efficiency and unity which his own generation could not furnish. In certain ways Kempenfelt was a precursor. It is against this background that we have to see the war in West Indian waters, the complex jealousies of admirals and captains, the early days of Nelson's Navy.

<sup>1</sup> Letters to Captain Middleton dated 6th and 9th August, 1779, *Barham Papers*, i, pp. 293-4.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Lord George Germain dated 4th September, 1779, *Naval Miscellany*, iii, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Captain Middleton dated 8th August, 1780, *Barham Papers*, i, p. 329.



## West Indian Waters

**B**EHIND Lord Sandwich, and the range of the embarrassed administration which Lord North controlled, there stood the figure of the King. During the period of the Keppel trial George III took a personal interest in naval affairs which was at once detailed, fussy and imperative. From the Queen's house at Greenwich he would send out his urgent letters. He reprobated the old Whig admirals like the Duke of Bolton, formerly Lord Harry Powlett, and Sir Thomas Frankland as well as the young political captains like Leveson-Gower. On the other hand he found time to praise Captain Alexander Hood, who had commanded the *Robust* 74 in Palliser's division of the Channel fleet. It had been asserted that alterations had been made in the *Robust's* log which were held to be favourable to the vice-admiral. "I trust,"<sup>1</sup> wrote George III when this charge was first brought home to him, "that his (Captain Hood's) conduct will rather be proved to have been actuated by over-niceness than by any inclination to alter the complexion of his document."

In this connection Mr. David Hannay,<sup>2</sup> writing on this occasion of Sir Samuel, has a valuable comment. "Hood was a 'King's servant,' and whatever we may think of the action of that party in parliamentary politics, it must be allowed that they were in their proper place on the quarterdeck of the King's ships engaged in fighting the King's enemies." It seems essential to strike this note in approaching the contribution of the brothers Hood.

Their first connection with the service had been romantic. One evening in the late autumn of 1740, when England was already at war with Spain and Frederick II was preparing for that attack on Silesia which opened the war of Austrian Succession, a hired post-chaise making for London had broken down in the village of Butleigh in Somerset. The passenger, Captain Thomas Smith, whose ship the *Dursley* had been paid off on her return from the Mediterranean, was entertained by the rector of the parish. When he

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 10th January, 1779, *Sandwich Papers*, ii, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Sir Samuel Hood*, Navy Records Society, p. xxi.

commissioned the *Romney* in the following year, Captain Smith took two of the rector's sons to sea with him.

The Hoods were among the earliest of those sons of the vicarage who have done so much to fortify the Royal Navy. At the same time they combined a thrusting ambition and a high efficiency with the capacity for gathering political support. Unlike their Whig predecessors they were the architects and not the inheritors of their good fortune.

It had all come to them in stages. Captain Smith, who died as an admiral of the Blue, "took them by the hand." He was a bachelor attracted by their zeal and clear ability. In the first place they were brought into the family circle at Hagley, for Admiral Smith was a natural son of Sir Thomas Lyttleton, a Lord of the Admiralty at the time when he was first launched on his sea career. The Lyttletons were first cousins of the Grenvilles whose sister Hester had married William Pitt. James Grenville was squire of Butleigh and patron of that living. In the course of time the Hoods became the only naval officers who were really intimate with the Pitt household. At a later date Lord Chatham trusted his youngest son James Pitt to them when he first joined the Navy. This was indeed a counterpoise to the phalanx of the great Whig families.

The Hoods belonged to that wide class of the men of middle station which the younger Pitt would call to his support. This form of Toryism would be most common on the quarterdecks of the fleet in Nelson's days. In the case of Sir Samuel Hood there was added a very close connection with the naval-burgess stocks of the seaport towns. His wife was one of the several daughters of Mr. Edward Linzee, a surgeon and apothecary in Portsmouth whose father had been master ropemaker in the naval dockyard. His brothers-in-law pressed about him Captain Amherst, Captain Holwall, Captain Linzee. Further he was at this time commissioner of Portsmouth dockyard, a post which while it indicated the retired list also involved the closest contact with the naval borough.

This was very far from that circle of the Whigs who were held to be the enemies of the royal prerogative. The Hoods for their part had something of that loyalty to the person of the sovereign which was to be so marked a characteristic of the naval officers who would fight the navies of the Revolution. The country clergy and the country gentry were the fit seed-plot for such a sentiment.

The whole position of the Hoods was present to the mind of the

experienced Lord Sandwich as he surveyed the scene in the late summer of 1780. Appointments were becoming difficult, and here was an officer of proved capacity separated from the first Lord's enemies and deeply anxious for active service. A special promotion was arranged. The two brothers reached flag rank and Sir Samuel Hood, rear-admiral of the Blue wearing his flag in the *Barfleur*, was ordered to the West Indies as second in command to Admiral Sir George Brydges Rodney.

It is always desirable to avoid a false antithesis when discussing rivals, but there seem solid reasons for regarding Rodney and Hood as two contrasting types. Both of them left a legacy to the later Navy, but it is just to consider Rodney as an admiral of the high eighteenth century who clearly prized his *mondain* interests and Hood as a new form of sea officer uniquely devoted to his great profession.

Rodney in the admiral's cabin of the *Formidable* was a poised, equable and distinguished gentleman with all that temperate pleasantness of thought and manner which his period valued so very highly. He stands out from his naval brethren, "the elegant and well-formed figure," that easy thoughtful smile. Lord Rodney,<sup>1</sup> wrote a friend in his last years, "being not only a great sea officer, but a man of highly-polished manners had always young men of family who walked his quarterdeck." His approach to his inferiors was very perfect. "Politeness,"<sup>2</sup> he wrote to his young daughter, "is due even to a beggar. Never forget it even to your own servants; it will acquire you friends."

By nature he was extravagant, and he had a conception, which Howe alone perhaps among the great admirals shared with him, of the sort of establishment he ought to keep. "The situation of the house,"<sup>3</sup> he wrote to his wife from the West Indies, "I like very much but not the price. What do they ask for Lord Carlisle's or Dick Vernon's in Grosvenor Square?" The manor house at Southwick took his fancy and later he would plan to re-purchase Stoke Rodney from the Duke of Chandos.

The political world was all about him. "A man in our country," he wrote,<sup>4</sup> "is nothing without being in Parliament. At all events

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Correspondence of Admiral Lord Rodney*, by Major General Mundy, vol. ii, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 371.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Lady Rodney dated 12th February, 1781, *ibid.*, ii, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Lady Rodney, dated from Barbadoes, 27th May, 1780, *ibid.*, i, p. 298.

I must have a seat." He had spent many thousands on the Northampton election and knew of the drain of these expenses. It was, perhaps, for this reason that Sandwich was so much at ease with him. The first Lord could be grand and imperturbable: "You will always find me moderate in what I ask of my friends, and<sup>1</sup> profuse in complying with their calls upon me." At the same time when Rodney with the West India trade in convoy was lingering in the Channel he could speak out. "For God's sake,"<sup>2</sup> wrote Sandwich, "go to sea without delay. You cannot conceive of what importance it is to yourself, to me and to the public that you should not lose this fair wind; if you do I shall not only hear of it in Parliament, but in places to which I pay more attention." With such a background Rodney had interests beyond the Royal Navy. He had been anxious a few years earlier to secure the governorship of Jamaica.

With all this he was a man who rendered and accepted services. Notes came from Sandwich.<sup>3</sup> "Captain Robertson of the *Fortune* sloop is much patronised by Admiral Barrington. Lord Cranstoun comes out in the *Torbay*. He is much patronised by the Attorney-General." "There is,"<sup>4</sup> wrote the first Lord after referring to Lord Charles Fitzgerald, "another young officer of fashion now in your squadron. You will infinitely oblige me. I mean Lord Robert Manners." It is not surprising that John Rodney, whom his father brought out with him, was advanced to be a post captain at the record age of fifteen. The admiral was complaisant and required the opportunities to create his fortune.

He needed money for his wife and his beloved family to maintain that peerage, preferably an earldom, which he made sure to earn. It was inevitable that the lure of prize money should have great sway with him. For a commander-in-chief it was not the merchant ships at sea which mattered most; it was the marts and stores and harbours of the lovely static prizes, the key islands lying off the Spanish Main. In the nature of things the conflict between Rodney and Hood about the taking of St. Eustatius was unavoidable, for Hood had in regard to prizes a detachment which was almost Puritan. Both admirals were very generous men, but Hood gave of his poverty and Rodney of his cumbered, transient and embarrassed wealth.

Besides, Rodney could not forget that he had been superseded when Admiral Pocock and Lord Albemarle obtained their vast haul

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, i, pp. 205-6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, i, pp. 270, 272.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, i, p. 207.

at Havana. He harked back to that mischance which secured to another "such great emoluments." Lady Rodney knew what she was saying when she wrote,<sup>1</sup> "the West Indies in general agrees well with you." Past the gout and his other sufferings the admiral's mind went out to those heat-laden waters. Two letters, one written in 1774 during the peace and the other in 1778 before he had obtained his last employment, bear out this point. "I encouraged<sup>2</sup> the petty officers of the squadron I commanded to take cruises in the *Dolphin* schooner, employed to fish for turtle on the kays of the coast of Jamaica and the Spanish Main, that they might be perfectly acquainted with the navigation of those seas." And again:<sup>3</sup> "The cruisers from St. Lucie can always stretch to windward of all the other islands and intercept any succour intended for them. Add to this the infinite consequence of the harbour called Little Carenage." Rodney had always known that there lay the field to exercise his high capacity.

There was, too, something imperialist in his approach which seems to suggest a later age. It was surely a Tory phraseology. Sandwich would write to him<sup>4</sup> in the days before the battle of the Saints' Passage that "the fate of this empire is in your hands." This is in keeping with the admiral's own words to his wife.<sup>5</sup> "I am of opinion that the great events which must decide the empire of the ocean will be either off Jamaica or St. Domingo." He had always had the wide far-flung conception. "The King, my best friend,<sup>6</sup> has a right to my services and he shall have them."

To his family the admiral was most devoted; Lady Rodney, his second wife, was perhaps a little frightened of him. She was twenty years his junior, the daughter of a Lisbon merchant fortune. Her letters breathe a constraint beyond that necessitated by a formal period. "Adieu, my dear Sir George." The eldest son, by Rodney's marriage with Lord Northampton's niece, was a colonel and in Parliament and independent. It was the daughters of the second marriage whom the admiral truly loved. The portraits of Anne and Jenny hung in his cabin both in the *Sandwich* and the *Formidable*, above the "sopha" with the leather cushions. He often spoke of the joy these pictures gave him as he sat at his cabin table before the opened folio volumes of his service letters. In every note home he

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Philip Stephens, *ibid*, i, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to the Earl of Sandwich, *ibid*, i, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 182. <sup>5</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 201. <sup>6</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 139.

referred to Loup, the "sensible dog" that he had given them. The admiral would bend his easy mind to their dancing academy and their writing master. Pride and affection swayed the little girls. "It would be horrid for you," his daughter wrote to him,<sup>1</sup> "to have a fever in the hot place you are in, and people you do not know to wait upon you." One of the prizes that he had taken he re-named after her the *Jenny*.

So much for Rodney's private background; two inter-related qualities characterise his public life, a deep feeling for the comity of the old regimes and a tart approach to the officers of his own service, "That this (humanity)," he is found writing<sup>2</sup> to Don Juan de Langara after he had beaten him off Cape St. Vincent, "has ever been the characteristic of the British nation is well known to the whole world. Spanish honour has likewise ever been proverbial with us." The courtly phrase lay on the solid parchment, the negro trade to Jamaica opened by "His Catholic Majesty's edict."<sup>3</sup>

The admiral's acquaintance with the French capital was vital to his broad unchastened outlook. There he saw the elements of that integrated social pyramid which his generation would in time regard with easy scepticism. In a prize money war the merchant class were victims and gentlemen of honour the beneficiaries. It seems a paradox to state that there was, perhaps, never a time when French and British officers possessed so close a mutual understanding as when the Comte de Grasse and Sir George Rodney paced the quarter-decks of the flagships of the fleets sent out by the Most Christian King and His Britannic Majesty.

On the other hand, when he spoke of "the black ingratitude of man," the admiral's mind went back to naval rivals. Sir Thomas Byam Martin might record<sup>4</sup> that "Lord Rodney had the credit of being a refined courtier, and could say civil insincere things with a winning grace;" but in private he was singularly natural. Two sentences of considered judgment are unforgettable.<sup>5</sup> "Such is the effect of fear. They knew there was no trifling with me, and that my eyes were upon them." And again: "Sea officers in general are too apt to be censorious. It is their misfortune to know little of the world and to be bred in seaport towns."

A very different type of man from Rodney was travelling west-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 250.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid, i, p. 155    <sup>3</sup> Ibid, i, p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> *Journals of Sir T. Byam Martin*, Navy Records Society, vol. i, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Life of Rodney*, i. p. 215 and ii, p. 358.

wards. Byam Martin speaking in his recollections of Hood's departure mentioned<sup>1</sup> that the lower gun ports of the *Barfleur* were "only about four feet out of the water" not too narrow a margin for the "smooth-water seas." A letter from Sir Samuel,<sup>2</sup> written off Marie Galante as the regular trade winds bore him towards Jamaica, breathes the atmosphere of those oppressive waters. "I lived almost in the open air in my stern gallery."

The actions about to be described require a footnote on those tropic waters. The constant factor is the trade wind blowing down on the Windward Islands from a little to the north of east over the open sea. From May till October the wind veers round almost to due east, and the last three months of this second period is the hurricane season when in general operations were not attempted.

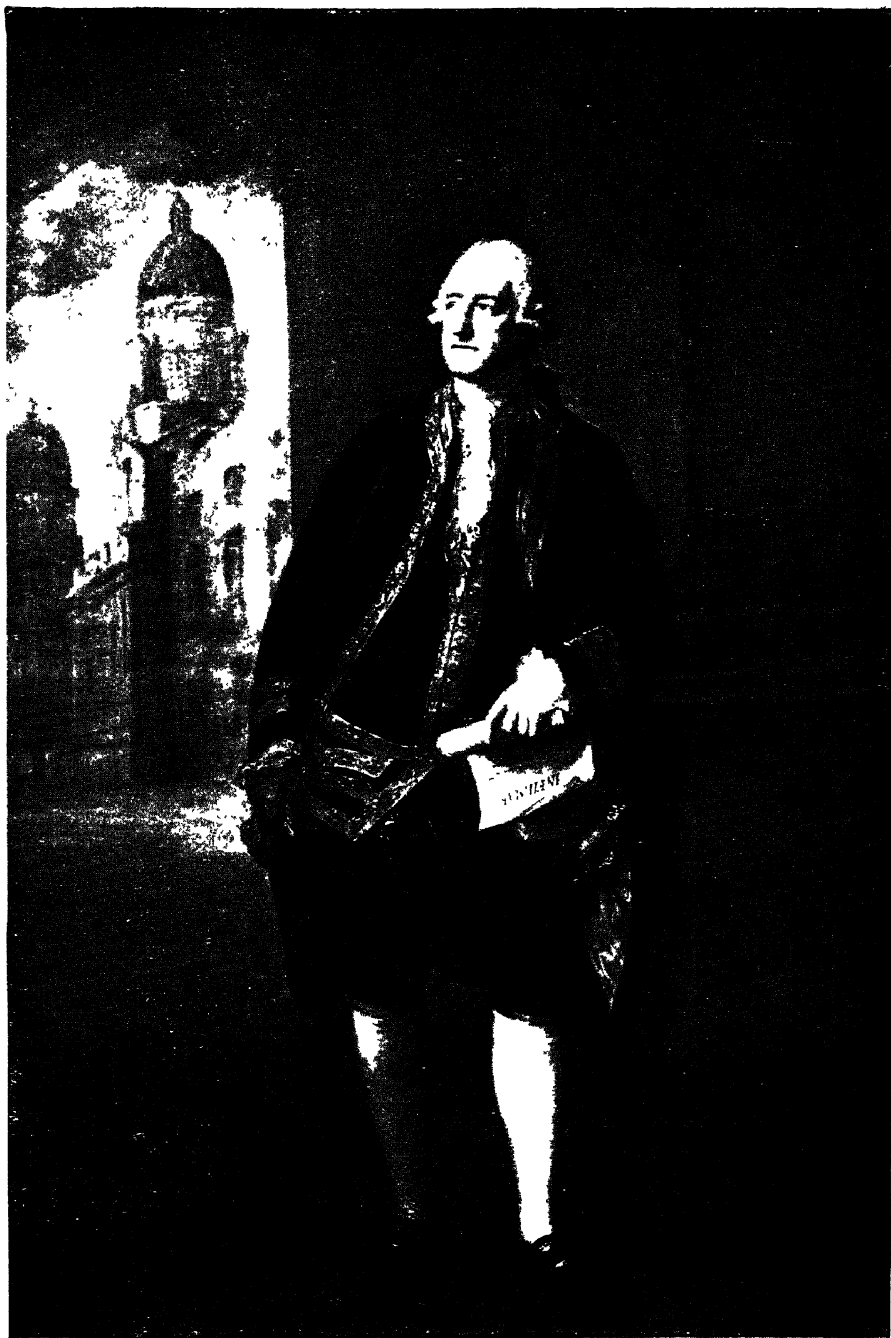
During this season the main fleets of the belligerents were accustomed to go northward up the then disputed eastern seaboard of the United States. Two points made long ago by Admiral Colomb in his *Naval Warfare* seem to have a permanent validity. "The approximately fixed direction," he wrote,<sup>3</sup> "from the eastward, and approximately fixed force of the wind, gave the easternmost positions in the West Indies an advantage over the western." As an instance the admiral referred to the situation of the two principal British naval bases of English Harbour and Port Royal. The distance from Antigua to Jamaica is roughly 850 miles. A well-found sailing ship would run from the first to the last place in seven or eight days, but the return voyage made by beating against the wind south of Hispaniola and Porto Rico would fully occupy three times that amount of time." Viewed in this light the crucial factor was the arrival of great fleets from Europe. These were at once a menace to the British power and gave the chance of victory to the British seamen.

The Mona Passage, preferably, and then the Windward Passage were the normal approaches to Jamaica for sailing ships from Europe; but the centre of the fighting was to be the Windward Islands. Away to the eastward the French bases of Guadeloupe and Martinique lay in the chain which swept southwards from the Virgin Islands beyond Porto Rico down to the last outpost Trinidad. The straits between the islands were very narrow. Northwards and

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of Sir T. Byam Martin*, i, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in *The Admirals Hood*, by Dorothy Hood, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Naval Warfare*, 1891, p. 206.



JOHN, FOURTH EARL OF SANDWICH





southwards from Martinique across the Dominica and St. Lucia channels the neighbouring land was only separated by twenty-two and eighteen miles of sea. North again from Dominica there lay those straits which gave their name to Rodney's battle, the Saints Passage. These islets with the landmark of the Church at Bourg des Saints lay barely five miles south of Guadeloupe with a heavy tide rip making in the relatively shallow depths. There were fourteen miles of open water between them and Dominica.

It was in these seas that the British squadrons would await the enemy. The rollers broke monotonously on the Virgins and on the shelving rocky ledges to north-west of Guadeloupe. The anchorages were all on the inner or Caribbean side of the different islands away from the long surge of the Atlantic. There, when the Trades were light, the calms were frequent. On the western side of Guadeloupe lay an area of baffling winds and calms which extended for twenty miles beyond that coastal passage where ships could benefit by the light night wind off the land. Under the lee of Dominica heavy squalls would come down off the mountains when the Trades were at their strength. The swell heaved on the coral reefs of Marie Galante, where the belfry of the church at Grand Bourg was the watch tower towards Europe. The clouds lay about the mountain tops, and the dolphins and flying fish broke the tropic seas. It was a paradise, and mathematical.

The conflicts had the same remote quality and a quiet urbanity. The fiercest struggles were not against a human enemy but with the hurricanes. In most years the hurricane season would take its toll, and in the autumn before Sir Samuel Hood arrived the losses had been disastrous. The *Thunderer* 74, wearing the broad pennant of Commodore Walsingham, had disappeared together with six lesser naval vessels. The toll that the iron-bound coast of Ushant was to exact in later times from English frigates was already paid in the West Indies, *Repulse*, *Penelope*, *Phoenix*, *Blanche*, *Andromeda*. We have now come to those lovely frigate names whose classical associations Lord Barham was to strengthen as he sat searching through his *Lemprière*, while the hulls grew on the slipways, *Naiad*, *Leda*, *Andromache*.

This is indeed the note of all that war in the West Indies, the agony was the fight against the elements not the still battles. Compare the battle of the Saints' with its few casualties with all the losses on the voyage home in the great gales of the following

September when the captured flagship *Ville de Paris* foundered together with the seventy-fours which had been conquerors and vanquished in Rodney's victory, *Ramillies*, *Centaur*, *Hector*, *Glorieux*. Throughout the naval wars there was this harvest of the sea.

The value of the West Indian islands, which were divided between Spain and France and Britain, was two-fold. In the first place the sugar plantations worked entirely by slave labour were a sound investment. As an example the British sugar islands were controlled by a ring of planters and merchants who had considerable weight in the city of London. There was thus a trade to be protected in peace or war.

In the second place there was the strategic factor at a time when the future of the American continent seemed so uncertain. Until the revolt of the colonies along the Atlantic seaboard the idea of secession from European sovereignty, which was to become the pattern for Latin America, appeared hardly conceivable. Meanwhile the French and British islands in the West Indies could act as a lever to work into the Spanish trade with Cuba and the mainland. It is probable that the idea of an actual conquest of Spanish territory was present to both Powers from time to time.

In the war under consideration the French attempted in a desultory fashion to capture the British islands one by one, Jamaica was naturally the chief prize aimed at. The struggle was not pressed to a finish; so much depended on the success or failure of the North American states in their resistance. The most considerable naval action of this war, the battle of the Saints' Passage, did not take place until it was clear that General Washington would prove victorious. By this victory the threat to Jamaica was removed, but the war was in any event near its end. It would not long continue once Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown.

Few wars are more susceptible of presentation by diagram than this series of operations. In 1778 the French forces under Bouillé took Dominica and in the same year the English captured St. Lucia. This gave the British fleet an advanced base within thirty miles of the enemy's main West Indian harbour, Fort Royal in Martinique. Northwards their territory stretched a compact block Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe.

The situation changed with the development of that Armed Neutrality which so strangely anticipated the lay-out of later warfare. A league which the lesser Powers had joined was formed

under Russian and Prussian inspiration to protest against the British practice of seizing enemy goods carried in neutral bottoms. The maintenance of the right of search had ranged the Danish, Swedish, and Dutch navies against the ships of His Britannic Majesty. It was thus that after a century of alliance Britain found herself again at war with the United Provinces. This was the explanation of that battle which otherwise seems to us so incongruous, the heavy indecisive action fought in 1781 by Sir Hyde Parker the elder against a Dutch squadron off the Dogger Bank. Incidentally it did much to make possible that period of Anglo-Dutch warfare at the close of the century which was marked by Duncan's victory at Camperdown. In the West Indies this increase in the area of the conflict laid the Danish and Dutch possessions open to attack. The ensuing operations caused the first conflict between Sir George Rodney and Sir Samuel Hood.

It is always difficult for a neutral country which has driven a profitable traffic in time of war to find herself caught up in the conflict. The little Dutch island of St. Eustatius away to the north-west of Gaudeloupe beyond Monserrat, Nevis and St. Kitts was just such an *entrepôt*. To Rodney it appeared a golden chance. The great French islands with their troops and squadrons would yield no such opportunity. There lay the harbour frontage with its miles of warehouses, six frigates and one hundred and fifty cluttered merchant ships. It was the lost fortune of Havana which was once more offered him. The work was successfully completed and stores to the value of three hundred thousand pounds quietly secured.

To sort out the profit was most difficult. Now that the trade with the North American plantations was cut off, a great deal of colonial produce had been purchased in St. Eustatius by the merchants in the English sugar islands. There was claim and counter-claim, and it is here that we come to Hood's acerbity. "The truth is,"<sup>1</sup> he wrote on 24th June, 1781, to his friend Jackson in reference to Rodney's colleague General Vaughan, "I believe he could not bear the thought of leaving St. Eustatius, where he fancied there were three millions of riches, as his letter to Lord G. Germain expressed."

It was at this point that the embarrassments which always haunted him gathered around Rodney. There were questions in the House of Commons about St. Eustatius. Lawsuits were set in motion

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sir Samuel Hood*, ed. David Hannay, p. 22.

by the planters and the ships in which he sent home his hoarded treasure were captured by the French. He had had two talented and indecisive battles with de Guichen off Martinique and the St. Lucia Channel in the spring of 1780. His gout was worse and now the gravel gained on him. In August, 1781, he went home to England in the *Sandwich* convoying the "trade," back on leave to face his enemies.

The succeeding months found Hood in command on the West Indies station. They witnessed those engagements off the Basseterre of St. Kitts which added so materially to his reputation. It is true that the final consequences of these actions were trivial since they were in essence an unsuccessful effort to relieve the island of St. Kitts whose small British garrison was hard pressed by a superior French military force. At the same time these battles against de Grasse off the Basseterre showed the swiftness of Hood's mind in its full vigour and his close understanding of his captains. One of the latter, Lord Robert Manners of the *Resolution*<sup>1</sup> described the key point of the action on the first day as "the most masterly manoeuvre I ever saw."

Contemporary accounts reveal a clear appreciation of the talent of the British admiral. There is a note of cordial admiration then very rare, a foreshadowing of that note of attention and respect which Nelson would awake in his own captains. The whole matter shows a flexibility of mood and spirit that was wholly novel. Within limits, Hood succeeded in bending his adversary to his will.

The situation had deteriorated in North America and in October, 1781, Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown. General Washington was now in control of the whole of the United States. The actions in the West Indies took on an isolated character. They were no longer related to operations in northern waters. A serious domestic consequence ensued; Lord North's administration was near its end.

In a short time Rodney was back again from England and the scene was set for the Saints' Passage. "The force I am now honoured with," he wrote<sup>1</sup> from on board the *Arrogant* in Cawsand Bay, "is such when joyned that I flatter myself it will restore the Empire of the Ocean to Great Britain." It is interesting to compare this flushed and vinous style with Hood's more sober statement. "When the *President* joins I shall be twenty-two strong with which I beg you

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sir Samuel Hood*, p. 79.

will assure their Lordships I will seek and give battle to the Count de Grasse be his numbers what they may."

In mid-February the junction between Hood and Rodney was effected and they set to watch for the arrival of the new French reinforcements. It is a curious fact that they knew so little of what might be in store for them. The commander-in-chief was concerned for the defence of St. Lucia where the Carenage proved a base so much more valuable than Barbados for watching the enemy "Would<sup>1</sup> to God that General Mathew had but a sufficient number of troops to spare for the defence of St. Lucia, which island is of more consequence than all the British Caribbee islands." Hood kept his eyes fixed to windward where the enemy would be coming with the trade winds. He complained, apparently with justice, that he was kept cruising within five to ten leagues to windward of Point Salines. In consequence the "French armament" arrived in safety through the unguarded Dominica Channel. Only two line-of-battleships had escorted them.

After nine days in harbour the French fleet and convoy sailed together, the warships being bound for Cap François where they intended to join with the Spanish squadrons and go forward together to attack Jamaica. Among the Barham MSS at Exton Hall is a careful note of the Spanish vessels in Hispaniola; but the whole project sounds singularly unconvincing, the pattern of a manoeuvre not seriously meant. The war was moving to a close; each phase of the French action seems stamped by a defect in resolution.

It was on the afternoon of the day after the French ships sailed from Fort Royal that the look-out frigate made a signal for a fleet two leagues to the north eastward of Diamond Rock. Few battles have had a prelude so slow or so monotonous. Keeping in touch, Hood saw from the deck of the *Barfleur* at daybreak the next morning "the French fleet<sup>2</sup> with a number of vessels under convoy, bearing from N.N.E. to E., distance from four to twelve miles, extending from Prince Rupert's Head, Dominica beyond Guadeloupe. They appeared much scattered occasioned by light and variable winds."

Later in the forenoon a brief engagement took place beginning at ten minutes past ten and lasting for a quarter of an hour. A note in Hood's journal<sup>3</sup> is very typical. "Twenty minutes past eleven. I

<sup>1</sup> Dispatch quoted in Richmond, op. cit., p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Sir Samuel Hood*, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

was cheered by the *Royal Oak*; I ordered her to be hailed and desired to know why Captain Barnett had not made more sail, who replied he was becalmed." As the day wore on there was a further distant exchange of gunfire. "Fifty minutes past seven. I made the *Belliqueux*, *Magnificent*, *Centaur* and *Prince William's* signals for being out of their station." The admiral here appears his own taut self. So they went through the light airs of those seas and at ten the next morning could count from the masthead "twenty-two sail of the enemy between Guadeloupe and Dominica on the larboard tack." During the following night a fresh breeze sprang up in the middle watch and at dawn thirty-three French vessels could be seen to leeward from four to five leagues away in the Saints' Passage. The Trades from the Atlantic blew down on them; the *Canada's* log describes the weather<sup>1</sup> as "fresh gales and cloudy."

In the details of the ensuing conflict one cannot do better than epitomise some of the elements in the situation brought out in his account by Admiral Mahan.<sup>2</sup> In the early hours before the battle the *Zélé* 74 had sustained damage in a collision with the *Ville de Paris*, the two ships crossing on opposite tacks. At daybreak she was sighted in tow of a frigate heading for Guadeloupe. The engagement between the fleets began shortly after 8.0; but the British line came into action very slowly as the thirty-seven battleships made what progress they could in those light airs. Rodney's flagship the *Formidable* opened fire at 8.23, while Hood in the *Barfleur*, the thirty-first in the line and the centre of the rear division, was not engaged until 9.25. The leading British ships profited by the fresh Trades of the open channel.

It was at 9.15 that there occurred the first of the three successive "breakings of the enemy's line" which are always noted in this battle. Hitherto the ships had been sliding by on opposite tacks, the French holding the weather gauge. A shift in the wind gave the British their liberty and Rodney's flagship luffed and led through the French line astern of the *Glorieux*, which was the nineteenth of the thirty French line-of-battleships. Five ships followed the *Formidable*, and by 9.33 the *Canada* was to windward of the French. The *Duke*, which was the flagship's next ahead, also broke through the line, and the *Bedford*, sixth astern of the *Formidable*, luffed independently and led through between the *Hector* and *César*. Twelve

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *The Royal Navy, a History*, ed. W. Laird Clowes, iii, pp. 525-37.

line-of-battleships followed the *Bedford*; they comprised the whole of Hood's division. These operations, which were the core of the battle, were completed by a quarter to eleven.

The *Glorieux*, *Hector* and *César*, raked at close quarters by the broadsides of so many British ships, were dismasted and lay motionless between the fleets. The captains of all three ships were slain and, together with the *Ardent* 64 an indifferent sailer, they surrendered. The only other capture was the *Ville de Paris* which hauled down her colours after expending all her ammunition. This was at 6.29, not long before the swift tropical sunset. At 6.45 Rodney made the signals to bring the fleet to; throughout the night they thus lay motionless.

Twenty-five of the French line-of-battleships escaped to the northward, and the action called forth all Hood's power of criticism. Rodney replied to his subordinate, "Come, we have done very handsomely as it is." The commander-in-chief's lassitude after overtaking his gout-ridden frame would seem to supply the explanation. The significance of the "breaking of the line" can be overpressed, for the French were already in some confusion and the result was, perhaps, in part accidental; but the crushing fire which this manœuvre brought down upon the nearest line-of-battleships was long remembered. Still it was Rodney who restored to sea actions that imaginative flexibility with which Nelson would achieve such great results.

Before news of this victory reached Whitehall a new administration, in which Admiral Keppel had succeeded Lord Sandwich at the Admiralty, had sent out one of the members of the Board, Admiral Pigot to replace Rodney. He was an officer of unimpeachable Whig principles and little service. The dying war did not require exertions from him; but by this act of Admiral Keppel's it may be thought that Lord Sandwich was avenged.

In spite of the battle of the Saints' Passage the general effect which this war produces is one of inconclusive naval contests. With all the talent that he displayed in operating so far from a base, no different impression is conveyed by the series of actions which the Bailli de Suffren fought with Hughes off the coast of Malabar. The practice of boarding seems in abeyance in capital ship actions. The whole range of fighting in the different seas between 1778 and the Peace of



Versailles in 1783 tends to culminate in the heading off an enemy from some objective towards which his approach was most usually half-hearted. A very different scene is presented by the frigate actions of this war.

Engagements between single line-of-battleships or actions with two ships of the line on each side, and sometimes with supporting frigates, occurred from time to time in the French wars. Still these have never had the character of the swift hard-fought battles between the fast-sailing frigates which were to be found in every navy after their lines had been settled in the mid-eighteenth century. Such frigates were well fitted to capture the heavily armed privateers of this period and they would also prove the most effective antidote to the commerce raider.

They made their captains' reputations and their fortunes. Perhaps the richest single capture in any war was that of the register ship *Hermione* inward bound for Cadiz from Lima which was taken in 1762 by the *Active*, Captain Herbert Sawyer, and the *Favourite* sloop, Commander Philemon Pownall. The Hoods' early service standing depended upon just such frigate actions, the *Vestal* and the *Bellone*, and the *Minerva* and the *Warwick*. Akin to such engagements was a single-ship battle between two seventy-fours when the *Bellona* took the *Courageux* in a forty minute action on a smooth sea after the ships had watched each other through a moonlit night off the coast of Portugal.

These actions all belonged to the Seven Years' war period; it was the war of American Independence which witnessed so many of the classic frigate duels. They were fought in every season and in every state of weather, the enemy often trying to slip past the British guard out from Brest to the Atlantic. The most favourable conditions depended on a calm sea and a little wind. The *Arethusa* and the *Belle Poule* fought a fierce but inconclusive battle for two hours on a still June evening off Plouescat and the *Flora* took the *Nymphé* off Ushant. The latter was a brief engagement and the French frigate was carried by boarding. As in several other instances the action was fought out in summer weather.

It was in these seas that the duel was fought between the *Quebec* and the *Surveillante*. This was, perhaps, the fiercest of all recorded single-ship actions. It lasted for eight hours of autumn daylight, the two vessels lying within musket shot throughout the sharp exchanges. George Farmer, who perished when his ship blew up,

is the most famous of all those officers who have been purely frigate captains. There were similar duels in the West Indies and when the *Magicienne* engaged the *Sibylle* the two frigates lay so close together that the men fought from their ports with pikes and rammers. It was upon such actions that popular enthusiasm in England was now concentrated; the ballad writing makes this clear. In place of Quiberon Bay we have the "Saucy *Arethusa*."

These frigate actions will be considered in closer detail when the first commission of the *Shannon* is described. In the later French wars these duels would sometimes be the consequence of a successful attempt to chase down a commerce raider. In the war of American Independence the engagements more usually took place close to some convoy route. There were often merchant vessels in the offing which the frigates or line-of-battleships had been sent to guard. In general the victory went to the ship with the greater weight of metal. Sometimes the casualties were very light and the captured ship in poor condition. This was the case in the engagement when the *Pégase* surrendered to the *Foudroyant*, Captain John Jervis, one of the line-of-battleships of the Channel fleet. Even in the month of Rodney's victory attention was focused upon this capture; successful actions of this character materially assisted the careers of several famous admirals.

Fortunately it is not only the technical side of these engagements which is clear to us. The autobiographies and memoirs have left this period well charted. Quite suddenly the careers of naval officers become more traceable. Thus Captain Nelson had with him as midshipmen in the *Boreas* in the West Indies two future admirals who belonged to an Anglo-Irish phalanx which was just appearing. These two, Sir John Talbot and Sir Courtenay Boyle, together with Lord James O'Bryen, Sir Henry Blackwood and Sir Robert Stopford were exact contemporaries born between 1768 and 1771. They were all destined for flag rank. Sir Thomas Pakenham, who had perhaps a share in setting up this movement towards the fleet in Irish Ascendancy families, was a few years their senior. This is just an instance of one strain among many which would diversify the quarterdecks of the late eighteenth century, the introduction of an element represented in the army by Wellington and Beresford.

The heyday of the naval dynasty was now passing and the generations of the Graves, Hothams and Hyde Parkers were in course

of being replaced by a wide series of young officers whose parents had introductions to some naval captain. Both Collingwood and Nelson, the first with reason, are regarded as belonging to this new type. In Nelson's case, however, an uncle, Maurice Suckling, the Comptroller of the Navy, gave him an early and compelling "interest" which set him far apart from the other many unprovided sons of Georgian clergy. It seems not unreasonable to discover in Nelson and some of his contemporaries, and notably among the Anglo-Irish, a new humanity towards the seamen. Captain Talbot's frigate *Eurydice* did not join the revolted ships in the Spithead mutiny.

The work of the press gang was continual. "The Press'd Man's Lamentation" is worth printing here:

Now the bloody war's beginning,  
Many thousands will be slain,  
And it is more than ten to one  
If any of us return again.

To hear the cries in every City,  
Likewise in every seaport town,  
'Twill make your heart to bleed with pity,  
For to hear the press'd men moan.

Now we are press'd and put into prison,  
Where for a season we must stay,  
Till the bloody wars call for us,  
For to cross the raging sea.

Together with the pressed men there went the problem of deserters, a subject which would require a separate monograph. It is clear that they were very numerous, the chief attractions being a new life in a distant colony or service on board a merchantman. In a letter book belonging to Captain Middleton, later Lord Barham, and now among the Countess of Gainsborough's MSS, there is a copy of an interesting order made out by Vice-Admiral Sir James Douglas on 14th May, 1777. "The desertion of seamen from Haslar Hospital," so the preamble runs, "having been lately very great, and it being observed there are several places in the wall round the hospital at which it appears they can get over, particularly where

some nails are stuck in, and trees growing near the surgeons garden which I have ordered to be taken down as they all tended to facilitate their escape, and it being a practice among the men that want to be discharged to wear long beards, and make themselves look worse than they really are . . . it is absolutely necessary that a captain should visit the hospital every week and I intend that the said visitation should be made every forenoon."

In this connection it would seem established that the punishments, which were much more severe in the Navy under George III than they had been a century earlier, had no effect on the desertion rate. The journals kept by Captain, later Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley when in command of frigates contain an entry<sup>1</sup> which has an interesting bearing on the relation between officers and men. "Tuesday: Feb. 24th (1778). Flog'd Samuel Hall for drunkenness and mutiny, who told me that I had declared I would flog every man I saw drunk, and that he had seen me so once in company on board in a harbour. I confessed that he had reason to say I was that day in liquor, but there was a considerable difference—I had no duty to do, and always retained sufficient sense to walk quietly to my bed."

Two autobiographies of about this date give an impression of an approach to the Navy other than that through the midshipmen's berth. The first deals with a boy whose contacts were always with the outer edge of naval life. Samuel Kelly, a Cornishman of Irish extraction, was born at St. Ives in 1764. He went to sea with the Falmouth packet service in which Admiral Pellew's father was then a captain. He next joined the *Jason*, a Sunderland ship hired as a transport. His account gives a picture of life on board a moderate-sized merchantman taken up by the Admiralty for this service. The ship, which was much haunted by rats, took on board at Portsmouth one hundred and twenty-seven men, part of the complements of the *Edgar* and *Elizabeth* line-of-battleships. They were discharged from the Navy at the general peace and were to be taken to their home port. One can see them shaking free from the years of taut discipline: they were obviously friendly to the self-reliant lad. Most of them were landed at Leith where Kelly visiting a public house, called Lucky Curries, with some of these seamen obtained<sup>2</sup> "an excellent bottle of London porter for fourpence with

<sup>1</sup> *Pasley Journals*, ed. Rodney M. S. Pasley, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Samuel Kelly, an 18th century seaman*, ed. Crosbie Grastin, *passim*.

bread and cheese into the bargain." The transport was then sent out to the Bahamas, "the ship being fitted out with bed places by Government, originally for army officers and still at the disposal of the agent."

The career of William Richardson is both more complicated and more interesting. In its less dramatic elements it seems also very typical. Richardson was born at South Shields in 1768, the son of a ship master of that town who himself came from Portsoy in Banffshire. After three voyages with his father he was apprenticed aged thirteen to Captain Stephen Atkinson, master and part-owner of the *Forester*, a Newcastle collier sailing to London and Lubeck. For the first fourteen months he acted as captain's cabin boy doing housework in the master's home in Sellar Street, Newcastle, when the collier was laid up. In 1790, at the age of twenty-two, Richardson signed on with Captain Wilson of Wellclose Square, Tower Hill, as fourth mate of the *Spy*, a slaver bound for Guinea then fitting out at Ratcliff Cross. Two years later he shipped as quartermaster in the East Indiaman *Prince of Kaunitz* and was pressed into the Navy at Diamond Harbour. He was brought on board the *Minerva* 38 and after two years of war-time service received a gunner's warrant in 1795. He served mainly in the West Indies, and always in this rank, being superannuated after the peace. His wife, Sarah Thompson, was the daughter of a master stonemason at Portsea. These details throw a light on the recruitment of the men who, as masters, carpenters and gunners, formed the staple of the naval life below commissioned rank.

Parallel with this career is that of a gunner of a generation earlier, George Patey. The late Fleet Surgeon C. Harvey, R.N., collected the known facts relating to this warrant officer.<sup>1</sup> George Patey was born at Plymouth on 18th August, 1729, of West Country stock, apparently from Tiverton. He joined the *Otter* 10 from the shore as a coxswain in 1753 and was promoted to gunner four years later. Like Richardson he served constantly in this rank; he was paid off from the *Warrior* 74 in 1783, and there are no records of his service between 1760 and 1776. He had seventeen children, all ten sons joining the Royal Navy. Sometime before 1769 he moved his home from Plymouth to Stonehouse, where his younger sons were born and where he himself died in 1794.

He was gunner of the *Warrior* at the battle of the Saints' Passage.

<sup>1</sup> Assembled in *The Naval History of the Patey Family*, privately printed.

Three of his sons were present at this engagement, William as lieutenant in the *Boston* frigate, Edward as servant to his brother in that ship and Charles as gunner's servant in the *Warrior*. Another son George had died from wounds received on board the *Montague* at the action off Basseterre.

The Pateys progressed and in the third generation reached flag rank. It is worth noting that in general the families of masters and gunners came from a background of some substance, shipmasters, farmers, independent tradesmen. It was rare indeed for the son of an agricultural labourer, like the great explorer Captain Cook, to attain to commissioned rank. In their earlier naval generations the Pateys may well stand for a whole range of established stocks in seaport towns, open at times to the influence of Methodist Revivalism, deeply conservative, a bulwark against mutiny.

A great gulf was fixed between such families and those of the seamen. In view of such insulation it is not surprising that the element of mutiny, which was simmering during all these years, was not apparent to the Board of Admiralty. The affair of the *Bounty* was a special case and treated as such, but it is more remarkable that such a mutiny as that in the *Invincible* 74 at Portsmouth in 1780 did nothing to prepare naval officers of rank for the experience of Spithead and the Nore.

A note on the pay of seamen seems called for here. During the reign of Henry VIII seamen received a shilling a week in harbour and a shilling and threepence at sea. As far back as that period prize money was to be divided among the whole ship's company. The pay increased by stages; ten shillings per lunar month in 1586; fourteen shillings, after deductions made, in 1626; nineteen shillings under the Parliament. In the reign of Charles II the practice of bounties was introduced and the pay reached a fixed level which, under George III, was still unaltered. The Spithead mutineers were to ask for a shilling a day for able seamen and in the event would receive an increase of four shillings and sixpence a month. It only remains to mention that a further increase of a shilling a week would be conceded in 1806 and that with the introduction of continuous service in 1853 the annual pay of able seamen would be fixed at £28 17s. 1d. This basic rate would not be altered through the nineteenth century, although there were many allowances and grants by which in fact it could be augmented. The prize money allotted to each seaman and marine in respect of Lord Howe's

victory amounted to rather over two pounds. One can appreciate the effect created when payment fell into arrears. If each total seems extremely meagre, it must be compared with rates ashore and be seen in relation to the pay roll of the private soldiers, footmen and postillions who built up that public glory on which the old world thrived.

## *Background to Nelson*

THE WAR of American Independence was ended by the treaty in which Great Britain recognised the sovereignty of the thirteen colonies now formed into the United States. At the Peace of Versailles, also signed in 1783, the last conflict with the France of the old regime was likewise closed. The pattern of eighteenth century naval history was completed. Lord Howe had relieved Gibraltar, thus ending the last and longest siege of the great fortress. There would never again be major operations between two great fleets in the West Indies. The British victories on land had set a term to the campaigns of rival naval squadrons in East Indian waters. The deep mutual respect between opponents would not again recur.

There were now six years of peace before the outbreak of the French Revolution which would lead to a period of increasing tension. At the beginning of February, 1793, ten days after the execution of Louis XVI, war broke out between Great Britain and the French Republic. Here was the same enemy but such a different sentiment. The first of the modern wars of ideology gave birth to hatred. The courteous exchanges between rival admirals were now over and a moral indignation, which was both bitter and class conscious, took possession of the minds of naval officers.

At the same time and partly in consequence of these great events the political struggles in England lost their edge. The concept of the King's Friends had vanished; the old political factions resumed their sway with a more even balance between Whig and Tory. The Revolution tended to produce a *union sacrée* among the English possessing classes. It was only those officers who were or had been closely associated with the Board of Admiralty who resigned through reasons based upon domestic politics. George III had himself withdrawn from the active intervention which had marked the earlier portion of his reign. The killing of the King and Queen of France made naval officers more firm in their devotion to their own sovereign. A note of reverence was creeping in.

If they were more reverent, they also were more insular. A tone of patronage is often found in any naval reference to Britain's



Sicilian or Portuguese allies. The officers felt themselves to be without an equal ally faced by an enemy with whom they would not treat. Their only real compeer had been that ordered naval service of the old French Crown whose tradition had foundered with the breakdown of the Monarchy. All the naval customs which date from the early days of these new wars stress the separateness of the life of English seamen. The outline of the interests of England stood out in definition.

Over the whole of this fresh conflict there lay a sense of urgency such as the eighteenth century had never known. In its early stages it had something in the nature of crusading fervour in which the monarchies were seen as salvaged from the forces of the infidel Republic. Later, when the danger to England grew acute and the Revolution had produced its military genius in Napoleon Bonaparte, such sentiments gave way before the strength of patriotism.

In the case of both the sea and land forces the outbreak of the war of the Revolution found men of the old regime, nurtured in the eighteenth century traditions, in chief command. For this reason the period of Lord Howe's command in the English Channel, which lasted effectively from the spring of 1793 until the summer of 1795, is a link between the worlds. The admiral himself was rooted wholly in the ancient ways. His principal operation, known as the battle of the Glorious first of June, had none of the urgency of annihilation which was to mark Nelson's concepts. The relations with his officers recall the period of Rodney and Boscawen, the perseverance, the aloofness, the closed reserve. The action itself has many features of interest. Its early stages bear the impress of that strong energy which we associate with this great war; but the admiral's mind was dominated by the need to regain the mathematical line of battle. One feels that Howe considered that the enemy's destruction, as opposed to his defeat, was hardly possible. Far out in the Atlantic the old navy of the Hanoverians and the young service of the Revolution fought together.

Sometime in the reign of George IV there was a fire at Westport House, a great stone Georgian country seat looking down over its demesne lands to the green-backed islands in Clew Bay and the cliffs of Achill. Before the blaze was brought under control, it had destroyed the trunks which the Marchioness of Sligo had brought with her from England. Thus perished the mass of private papers of the great Lord Howe. It is strange that the records of this admiral,

an old high Anglo-German from the centre of the Hanoverian world, should have been destroyed in a windy fire on the hills of Connaught. It has its own importance since there was no naval commander, not even Rodney, who has the same crucial significance as Earl Howe for the age in which Horatio Nelson was a captain.

There was much to be said for the state of affairs in the sea service which enabled boys to enter by so many channels; it was at the other end that one could feel the complications. No question of an age limit had yet arisen. It was rare for flag officers to feel too old to go to sea again. Lord Hawke had died in 1781 and Lord Rodney was crippled by the gout, but other senior officers of the war of American Independence were very ready to hoist their flags once more. Against this background one can trace Lord Howe's command.

In the years of the war scare and the war, in 1790 and 1793, there were in fact two full generations of admirals and post captains who were applying all at once for sea employment. Some had obtained commands at the time of the Nootka Sound crisis which involved England and Spain in the spring and summer of 1790. The rest were all satisfied in the great squadrons which were assembled three years later on the outbreak of the war with France which was the consequence of the Revolution. It was not the elder admirals only who had settled in the modest country houses which now begin to appear upon the naval scene. The young captains in their 'thirties and early 'forties had likewise been ashore. Collingwood had passed five years and Nelson six without employment; although it is interesting that Collingwood had obtained a frigate, the *Mermaid* 32, at the time of Nootka Sound, while Nelson was refused one.

It seems unlikely that it can ever be of advantage for the first Lord of the Admiralty, who then doubled the rôle of political chief and also first Sea Lord, to return again to active service. Nevertheless George III, by one of those acts of royal authority to which he was so prone, had confided the command of the grand fleet to Richard Earl Howe, who had been first Lord of the Admiralty for the five years which had preceded the King's derangement. He did not find favour with Mr. Pitt, who took occasion to replace him by the Earl of Chatham. That was in 1788 and neither of the Pitts could relish an adamantine stiff sea officer. It is worth examining his character rather closely. We can never really picture Nelson's fleet until we have understood Lord Howe's.

Quite apart from the destruction of the manuscripts, the sources

on the whole are not too plentiful. Sir John Barrow's biography, apart from the undigested correspondence, is mediocre. There is little to be said for George Mason's volume, the work of a distant suppliant acquaintance. More interest is found in Admiral Hotham's cool and gentleman-like appraisal and in the freshness of Lieutenant Edward Codrington's young hero-worship. Before entering on the details of Lord Howe's career it is well to give the impressions of these officers. Both men were the same age, William Hotham being born in 1772 and Codrington in 1770. The former had never known Lord Howe, but he held much to the opinion of the other Hotham admirals, his uncle and his cousin. Codrington had been his flag lieutenant.

"He had,"<sup>1</sup> writes Hotham, "like all men in power, his opponents and supporters. It fell to his lot to quell two general and alarming mutinies in the fleet. In the fulfilment of this very delicate and difficult duty, he was supposed to have given way too much to the People. He might be considered as the Fabius Maximus of the British fleet. He was cold in his manner and not very accessible. In his person he was of the middle size. In speech he was short and gruff."

The impression made on Edward Codrington was very different. He was then a midshipman and known to Sir William Howe, the admiral's brother. "There was," wrote<sup>2</sup> Codrington in his later years, "a shyness and awkwardness in Lord Howe's manner that gave him a character of austerity that did not really belong to him." The circumstances of their first meeting bear out this point. The admiral, then about to hoist his flag as commander-in-chief in the *Queen Charlotte*, entertained the young man to breakfast at his house in Grafton Street, explained that he could not assist in his promotion since he was unwilling to ask a favour of Lord Chatham whom he found inimical and concluded by remarking that unlike his brother he always had so much difficulty in getting on with people. What were the facts behind this surprising and unbuttoned ease, this human trait?

Lord Howe came from the heart of the privileged world of the high eighteenth century. In his self-contained northern fashion he was *grand seigneur*. He had a deep concern for the welfare of his men; his roughness and compassion gained him their firm devotion. There was a legendary quality in his reputation, the slight trim

<sup>1</sup> *Private Papers of Sir William Hotham*, ed. A. M. Stirling, 1, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of Sir Edward Codrington*, ed. E. Bouchier, 1, p. 12.

figure, the peaked disdainful face, the thrusting chin, "Black Dick." As a technical seaman he stood high: he had re-made the signal book. He was kind; quizzical; a little disillusioned. Gout in the stomach troubled him.

Ambition in Nelson's sense he never knew. He was closest, perhaps, to Rodney although without his raffish tastes. St. Vincent admired Howe, just as Collingwood and Nelson admired Hood. His easy-going temper lay upon a sharp clear realism. He was worldly with a detailed knowledge of and abstention from the tides of corrupt politics. This was clearly contrasted with Nelson's unworldly innocence. It seems that it is accurate to state that the elder admiral conceived of duty where Nelson's mind would move in terms of glory. It was, perhaps, Howe's cardinal misfortune that he expected too little from his captains.

Born in 1726 Howe's life coincided almost exactly with the last three-quarters of the eighteenth century. On his mother's side he came of good, indeed exalted German blood. "Our families," King George was accustomed to say to him, "are somewhat related." He was only a child when his father died in Barbados from drinking cocoa nut milk while overheated, and he was brought up, a spell at Eton, perhaps a spell at Westminster, by his mother, Maria-Sophia-Charlotte von Kielmansegge. She had come over from Hanover as a child with her mother the Countess of Darlington, who was on intimate terms with George I and was lampooned as the "Elephant and Castle."

In politics Dick Howe had Tory sympathies, though no party man. He held the Dartmouth seat for a quarter of a century, inheriting in the meantime his brother's Irish viscounty. There was property in the Midlands, not much land, a few advowsons. At the age of fourteen he went to sea. His first ship was the *Severn*, Captain the Hon. Edward Legge, whose father the Earl of Dartmouth, son of the admiral, professed that Hanoverian Toryism which Howe came to favour.

Now for fifty years his life had been bound up with the Navy. He had begun the voyage of circumnavigation with Commodore Anson; he had fought French frigates off the west coast of Scotland after the '45; his ship had fired the first shot in the Seven Years' war; he had been commander-in-chief in North America. Away back in the 'fifties, when captain of the *Magnanime*, he had introduced, as has been noted, the practice of granting leave of absence to his ship's

company watch by watch. It was Walpole's hyperbole which described him in the phrase "as undaunted as a rock and as silent." At any rate he had been always there.

He had never forfeited his own shore interests; the improvement of his property at Porters in the heavy plough lands south of St. Albans; his family circle, elegant and affectionate; his new plantations. He was devoted to his daughters and arranged their marriages, Lord Altamont later Sligo, the wealthy Mr. Assheton Curzon, no naval officers. Howe had what Nelson never had, nor wished for, a state of privacy.

The independence of his character is shown in his relations with the royal family. "The Baroness Howe told me," wrote<sup>1</sup> Sir William Hotham, "that her father (the admiral) was some time before he could like or understand the character of George III, but that having done so, his Lordship formed a very exalted opinion of his Sovereign, and found him, upon every occasion, a man very much above courting popularity, and highly honourable and dependable." Each turn of phrase here is well worth weighing.

He was at this time sixty-seven and tired by the opposition he had met with at the Admiralty. Rigidly he spoke of himself in the third person with a chilly recognition of the fact that the new young Prime Minister had no need to purchase votes by granting favours. "Mr. Pitt,"<sup>2</sup> explained the admiral to Captain Fanshawe, "stood above all need of support, and made no requisitions for naval patronage; but Mr. Henry Dundas complained he could never obtain any appointment from the Admiralty for his Scots connections and dependants, and was continually carrying his complaints to Mr. Pitt of Lord Howe's intractable rigidity." He was shot at, too, from the naval side. He carried through the economies which the Ministry exacted. There was serious discontent within the Service when so many old captains were set aside and placed on the superannuated list, or, as it was then called, the list of yellow admirals.

An unencumbered manifest sincerity, a realistic view of his own actions and of his world and an almost startling gay simplicity led Earl Howe to the eve of his great charge. The seamen remembered how he used "to go below after an action, and talk to every wounded man, sitting by the side of their cradles, and constantly ordering his live-stock and wines to be applied (for them)." The feelings of senior

<sup>1</sup> Hotham Papers, i, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> Letters printed in Sir John Barrow's *Life of Earl Howe*, p. 191.

officers were more complex and here he was caged round by admirals in the grand Channel fleet, by Alexander Hood, Gardner, Bowyer, Pasley, Graves, Caldwell and Montagu. The first-named in particular failed to understand him.

Accompanying Lord Howe was the captain of the fleet, Sir Roger Curtis and an old *protégé* of the admiral's, James Bowen who sailed as master in the *Queen Charlotte*. With the latter, a man of great honesty, over-deferential in his approach, the commander-in-chief was on easy terms, chaffing and chiding him. "Bowen," the admiral was heard to remark,<sup>1</sup> "pray, my good fellow, do give over that eternal my Lord, my Lord." Sir Roger had been his flag captain in the previous war. They were well accustomed to one another and it seems that Howe admired his cautious seamanship. He was a Wiltshireman from Downton without influence until the admiral "led him by the hand." Sir Roger has left few *memoranda* and no clear picture of him emerges. He lived for long periods in Grafton Street; he was a friend of Lady Howe and Lady Mary. It seems that to some extent the captain of the fleet stood between the old commander-in-chief and his subordinates.

It must however be admitted that Codrington, who makes this point, is an unfriendly witness. "The *Pegasus*,"<sup>2</sup> wrote Codrington of the admiral's repeating frigate, "never got any credit from Sir R. Curtis. Captain Barlow (commanding the *Pegasus*) being one of Lord Howe's favourites and Sir R. Curtis always wishing to detract from them and not allow them to be favourites." It is understandable that the captain of the fleet might wish to come between the ageing admiral and his quick and carefree preferences. Sir Roger Curtis's own special friend was Captain Gambier, a name to note.

They were some time in getting the fleet ready. The *Queen Charlotte* was a new ship, but heavy and a slow sailer. She had not the turn of speed of the seventy-fours. She was destined to a short period of service, being burned to the water's edge as Lord Keith's flagship off Leghorn some six years later. A further complication was caused by the assignment of the greater part of the men entered at the Tower for the *Queen Charlotte* to the ships which were to go with Lord Hood to the Mediterranean. Lord Howe was certainly of the opinion, to quote Codrington's *Memoirs*, that the fleet for the expedition to Toulon had not only the pick of the seamen but the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of Sir Edward Codrington*, I, p. 21.

finer ships. Such was the background to the first great battle of the long French wars.

The action known as the Glorious first of June was in fact a series of engagements beginning on 28th May, 1794, and concluding four days later. The French fleet under Villaret-Joyeuse was pre-occupied with the safe arrival of a great grain convoy from the United States which was urgently needed in France whose eastern frontier was still menaced by the hostile armies. Howe had with him at this time twenty-six ships of the line having detached six ships under Admiral Montagu to protect convoys as far as the coast of Spain. At about the same time the French slipped out from Brest and made for the open waters of the Atlantic.

The fleets were in contact for several days as the grain convoy neared its destination. On the 28th there were heavy showers and a great head sea. Then squalls came on during one of which the *Queen Charlotte* split her jib as she was going forward under double-reefed topsails. Thirty-one enemy ships had been counted late in that forenoon. There were brief engagements which closed with nightfall; one French ship struck her colours but was recovered in the darkness by her own compatriots.

On the next day there was indecisive fighting, and after a sharp encounter the ships drew out of range again. For the ensuing forty-eight hours there was no chance of bringing the enemy to action; the thick fog closed down on the drizzling rain. In rare brief spells the French fleet could be detected. The general course had brought the British squadrons still farther out in the Atlantic. In fact at midday on the first of June they were one hundred and forty-three leagues from Ushant which bore N. 85 E. No great battle had yet been fought so far out to sea. Over four hundred miles of the western ocean separated them from the nearest land. In the heavy swell there could be no thought of boarding and the weather prevailing during the engagement brought an unparalleled destruction of masts and spars. Lord Howe had retained the weather gauge and the morning of that Sunday broke both warm and sunny.

The exhaustion with which the aged commander-in-chief approached the battle comes very clear to us for he had hardly slept during these nights. Codrington describes<sup>1</sup> the scene when the captain of the fleet went in to the admiral to make his report with the first light. "I, being officer of the watch, lifted up the canvas

<sup>1</sup> Codrington *Memoirs*, i, p. 31.

screen by which the cabin (then cleared for action) was divided from the quarterdeck. Lord Howe was in his greatcoat sitting in an arm-chair." He had had time, too much time perhaps, for long reflection.

One has the impression that throughout the first part of Sunday's action the admiral was still in doubt as to how far he could convey his intentions to his subordinates. There is no record of consultation with or initiative left to the junior flag officers. They fought their divisions well and three were wounded in the battle; but they have left little reputation as commanders except for Alexander Hood whom Howe disliked. Montagu was absent on detached service. An episode relating to Sir Alan Gardner shows what faint help the commander-in-chief might gain from his immediate supporters. Codrington records how Admiral Gardner kept three poop lanterns always burning and another in his cabin which he would carry out to the stern gallery when he saw the next in line coming too close. Howe had no feeling for such over-anxiety.

We have a picture of him surrounded by his officers on the poop of the *Queen Charlotte* on the eve of battle. "And now, gentlemen,"<sup>1</sup> he said shutting the little signal book which he always carried with him, "no more book, no more signals. I look to you to do the duty of the *Queen Charlotte* in engaging the French admiral. I do not wish the ships to be bilge to bilge, but if you can lock the yardarms so much the better." The victory of the Glorious first of June is dominated by this one conception.

Howe signalled that he would attack the enemy's centre and then again that he would pass through the French line and engage from leeward. He hoped, since the opposing fleets were relatively equal, to bring about a series of single ship duels in which the French ships would be shot to pieces. Once he was to leeward they could not escape down wind. It was shortly after eight, when the men had breakfasted, that Howe filled and bore down. This was an action in which both sides took some pains to get their line in order. The English ships were moving at about five knots. On board one of the French vessels, the *Sans Pareil*, was an English prisoner, Captain Troubridge, who had recently been taken in the *Castor*. "We bore down,"<sup>2</sup> he said of the British fleet, "as if we were coming to an anchor." The sea was smoother than it had been before the fog. The light was excellent; there was a long Atlantic swell.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 31.      <sup>2</sup> Barrow, op. cit., p. 256.



The British opened fire a few minutes before ten. The *Queen Charlotte* aimed to pass astern of the French flagship the *Montagne*. "Just as we were closing our opponent," explains Codrington, "the *Jacobin* was seen to run up under the *Montagne's* lee, doubling as it is termed, and Lord Howe expressed his doubts as to there being room for the *Queen Charlotte* to go between them. "That's right, my Lord,"<sup>1</sup> cried out Bowen, "the *Charlotte* will make room for herself."

In passing under the *Montagne's* stern,"<sup>2</sup> continued Codrington, "I myself waited at the bow port till I saw the rudder (guns 32 pounders: double-shotted) and then I pulled the trigger, the same sea splashing us both. The fly of her ensign brushed the shrouds. I recollect a large quantity of paper, as if from a printing press, fell into the sea between us from her stern." About this time the *Juste*, a red-sided vessel, yielded to the fire of the *Queen Charlotte*. It is interesting to note that Lord Howe at one point mistook her for the *Invincible*, so difficult was recognition in the smoke. Sir Andrew Douglas, the flagship's second captain, was wounded by a shot fired from the *Gibraltar*, her next ahead.

Meanwhile, the *Brunswick*, the ship immediately astern of the *Queen Charlotte*, was engaged in her great duel with the *Vengeur du Peuple*. In following the flagship her starboard anchors hooked in to the French vessel's larboard fore shrouds and channels. The two ships, paying off before the wind, dropped out of the line. For two and a half hours they were locked together until at a quarter to one the *Brunswick's* three anchors were torn away. The upper decks of both ships were almost untenable but the *Brunswick* had done great execution firing from her lower deck into the *Vengeur* as she rose and fell.

The severe injuries are worth remarking. The *Brunswick* had twenty-three guns dismantled; her starboard gallery was shot away; her best bower anchor with her starboard cathead was towing beneath her keel. When the *Vengeur* struck the seas were coming into her through a large hole in the counter; her rudder had been split. The battle had died down before midday. Beyond the captured ships a few miles away on that wide clear sea the *Phaeton* frigate made sail to the westward towing the *Defence*, having hauled on board the end of her stream cable. One note from the *Culloden's* log<sup>3</sup> gives an impression of those old battleships. Two

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 267.      <sup>2</sup> Codrington *Memoirs*, i, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Log of the *Culloden*, Navy Records Society, vol. xvi, p. 139.

hundred panes of glass were supposed to have been broken in the action.

In the afternoon the *Vengeur* sank; the Republican legend gathered about her. A letter from Lady Mary Howe to Lady Altamont shows how this legend, which Nelson so hated, would be seen in England. It was explained<sup>1</sup> that the French cartridge cases were mostly made of the fair painted church music used in cathedrals and of the *preuves de noblesse* of the principal families. The British took possession of six French battleships and brought them into harbour. No British ship was lost. The admiral richly earned the diamond sword and the gold chain which King George gave him.

Nevertheless it is a characteristic of naval battles that their later phases are seldom so successful as their opening moves. The Glorious first of June was no exception to the general rule which governs sea engagements. Four years earlier Clerk of Eldin, a middle-aged merchant laird full of quirks and energy, had published the first part of his *Essay on Naval Tactics—systematical and historical*. It had been concerned with the operation of engaging the enemy in pursuit from the windward quarter. There on the thick parchment-like paper with its fine brown graining were set out the explanatory plates to indicate how this successful operation was to be achieved. Sir Howard Douglas was to point out that Clerk's manoeuvres were particularly suited to be carried to a successful issue on the dining-room table at Eldin House. On the first of June as the day was lengthening Lord Howe found himself with the dismasted ships, friendly and hostile, in the long slow seas of the Atlantic.

There were in fact five dismasted French line-of-battleships in addition to those which the British boarded. These five vessels were not secured. They went off unmolested under their spritsails and succeeded in regaining their own fleet. It is fair to say that they could only have been taken had a general pursuit been ordered. The British had fought the enemy to a standstill; the phase of ship duels had been ended. Only Nelson or Nelson's example could have supplied the final move.

Besides, nightfall would always aid the weaker party. Thus in the darkness following the first day's action the *Révolutionnaire* had regained her consorts owing, as Rear-Admiral Sturges Jackson puts it, to "the lack of means of making any but the most elementary evolutionary signals at night." Throughout the remaining hours

<sup>1</sup> Barrow, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

of daylight the British seamen were engaged in quick repairs and in many instances in getting up the jury masts. The injuries to Howe's ships were most extensive. To re-form the line, now so much disordered, was according to practice and to prudent custom. According to Codrington, a hostile witness, Sir Roger Curtis recommended the bringing together of the scattered damaged ships. The vital grain reached France in safety.

There was still an atmosphere of careful rules and of established precedent. One point may be remarked. The frigates kept station on the disengaged side of the British battle fleet and to windward of them. "The Frenchmen,"<sup>1</sup> so runs Lieutenant Smith's clear narrative, "fired into the *Phaeton* in a rascally manner and killed five men." As Admiral Sturges Jackson remarks, it was not customary for line-of-battleships to fire at frigates unless the latter were taking part in an engagement. It is well to bear in mind this suave and regulated formalism. When the action was quite over his officers came round Lord Howe who was exhausted from sleeplessness and the long chase. "Why," said the admiral, "you hold me as if I were a child." It is a comment of great simplicity from one who had achieved success in battle. Only Nelson and those who thought with him would speak disparagingly of a "Lord Howe victory."

The aftermath was difficult. George III offered to the admiral the vacant Garter which Pitt had promised to the Duke of Portland, a political figure of indomitable significance. As Sir John Barrow puts<sup>2</sup> it, "the alternative of a marquessate was offered and declined."

There were peerages on the Irish establishment and baronetcies for flag officers. The Admiralty made a distribution of medals, but many captains were omitted. Collingwood in the *Barfleur* can hardly be said ever to have forgotten his resentment. The King came on board the flagship and the captains were not presented. The atmosphere was sultry in the great cabins of the line-of-battleships.

Among these officers were many notable figures all of whom reached flag rank in the wars. Domett of the *Royal Sovereign*, Gambier of the *Defence*, Parker of the *Audacious* and Calder of the *Theseus*, the last-named away on detached service, were all to reappear in Nelson's life and not as aiding him. There were the fashionables like Berkeley of the *Marlborough* and Bertie of the *Thunderer* and the two special friends of George IV, Lord Hugh Seymour and John

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Lieutenant J. Smith of the Queen's Regiment, Lord Howe's Actions, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of the Earl of Howe*, p. 252.

Willetts Payne, the latter captain of the *Russell*. There was Cotton of the *Majestic* and Hope of the *Bellerophon* and Pakenham of the *Invincible*, and in the *Orion* John Thomas Duckworth who, with Collingwood, is the best known of all Howe's captains. As the battleships swung at anchor in Spithead they bore on their poops and stern galleries this varied cargo of thirteen future admirals. Away in the frigates was Arthur Legge, whose grand uncle had commanded Lord Howe's first ship. It was the eighteenth century approaching its slow climax and very far from Nelson's band of brothers.

## *Nelson in the "Agamemnon"*

THE BATTLE that has just been described was an isolated encounter. Squadrons might brush with one another, but operations between great fleets in the Channel ended here. The political atmosphere in which the action was fought would also soon be dispersed. It took place in those months of the Jacobin supremacy known as the Terror between the death of Danton and the fall of Robespierre. A Jacobin representative Jean Bon St. André accompanied Villaret-Joyeuse to sea, but the Navy of the Revolution would soon pass out of the phase of domination by political commissars.

Henceforward the Channel was to be the scene not of battle but of blockade. It was the achievement of the British squadrons to keep the large French fleet immobilised. The occasional failure of this strategy can be seen in such an episode as the abortive expedition to Bantry Bay led by General Hoche in the winter of 1796 when the ships under Morard de Galles sailed from and returned to Brest without hindrance from the main Channel fleet.

Until a more serious project of invasion matured under Napoleon, interest concentrated upon the Mediterranean. The whole of this situation must be viewed in the light not of French peril but of French success. Originally the naval forces entrusted to Vice-Admiral Lord Hood had been intended to support that great attack on France which had been launched by Austria and Prussia to reinstate the fallen Bourbon throne. The Committee in Paris had declared war on Spain, to add to France's enemies another effete monarchy. It was for this reason that Spanish naval forces joined Lord Hood as he led his fine squadron in the *Victory* through the Straits of Gibraltar towards Toulon. This great base, with its fleet and its Royalist population, was the first objective.

The port indeed was occupied, but the sequel did not justify the rash beginnings. French military victories were to cause the breakdown of the first alliance. Soon Toulon, where Bonaparte had begun to make his name, was evacuated by the British and Spanish admirals. In 1795 both Spain and Holland made their peace with France and in a short time joined the French as allies. The command of the sea

became precarious with the progress of the French arms from victory to victory. They marched into the Low Countries and into Italy. Then not only the ports of Spain, but also those of Genoa and Tuscany and the Two Sicilies, would be closed to Lord Hood's ships.

The naval events in the Mediterranean between the evacuation of Toulon in December, 1793, and the withdrawal of the British fleet outside the Straits in November, 1795, were in consequence almost consistently discouraging. It is therefore all the more remarkable that a single officer, the captain of a line-of-battleship, should have been able to permeate the scene with his concept of glory.

It was with the outbreak of the long French wars that Captain Nelson made his first impact on the great Navy when he received command of the *Agamemnon*. Then very swiftly his name began to be known throughout the fleet. It is simplest to consider as one whole the period in which he served in the Mediterranean before his promotion to flag rank, for it was during these years that he created his unique reputation against a background which was radically disappointing.

His earlier career in the West Indies had done little to prepare men for what followed. In this commission he showed his quality and it is time to dwell upon the way in which his spirit was made manifest. The work at sea was hard, and the life was dull and arduous. Such actions as fell to Nelson's lot would not have given scope to many officers. The operations on Corsican soil and the engagement in which the French line-of-battleship *Ca Ira* struck her colours were not in themselves especially promising. It was his intense and flame-like purpose which was so swift to illuminate.

In regard to the first matter the Corsicans under Pasquale Paoli had agreed to assist the British, and the French garrisons were soon confined to two fortified ports, Calvi and Bastia. A blockade of the island by the British squadron followed, and after January, 1794, supplies for the beleaguered soldiers were cut off. It was one of those occasions on which difficulties developed between the naval and military leaders, and the senior army officer, General Dundas, held that his force was inadequate for the operation which the admiral proposed. In the event attacks were made by seamen and marines and by certain troops which had been placed under Lord Hood's command. Bastia was reduced on 21st May; Calvi was invested on 19th June and surrendered two months later. Nelson

was for much of the time the senior naval officer. In many ways this epoch acted as a curtain raiser.

Even from the first outbreak of the war there seems to have been a light upon the Mediterranean. It is in part the nervous vigour of Nelson's style and the white heat of his temperament which so illumines it. "To me,"<sup>1</sup> he wrote when commissioning the *Agamemnon* at the Nore, "it is perfectly indifferent to what quarter of the world we go: with a good Ship and Ship's company we can come to no harm." It is not surprising that, except for the vessel in which he died, the *Agamemnon* is the most famous of Lord Nelson's ships.

We are in a fresh atmosphere with the Corsican adventure and the attack on Santa Cruz. In the light airs of the Mediterranean and in those warm seas round Grand Canary the foggy opportunist politics of autumn at the Admiralty seemed far away. Lord Howe, still in nominal command although in great pain from the gout, and Alexander Hood become Lord Bridport were now at loggerheads. "You say,"<sup>2</sup> wrote the commander-in-chief, "that the Admiral (Bridport) is not in the best temper: his head I think is turned with the conceit of his important services. I have the most absurd official letter from him I ever read." Away in the Mediterranean the interplay of ministerial influence upon appointments could be disregarded. A hanger-on of the administration wrote<sup>3</sup> at this time of "triumphing with our *own Ministers* on the victories of our *own Admirals*." To Nelson such a phrase as this meant nothing. As he sat in his cabin the ideas streamed upon the paper; they were swift and uninhibited, "to be crowned with laurel or covered with cypress." His sword was his King's.

To obtain a view of this change of emphasis, this lightening of the spirit which Nelson brought, it is perhaps simplest to study the situation from a quite different standpoint. We have considered the outlook of admirals and flag captains and we must return to them again, but as long as Nelson was a captain this new influence would first act upon his officers and men. What of their records? We begin therefore with an examination of the letters of two boys, mere children, who had just joined the fleet. The first note is one of authoritative discouragement.

On 17th July, 1792, only a few days before the manifesto of the

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the Rev. William Nelson, dated 18th April, 1793.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 24th September, 1795, printed by Barrow, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Mr. A. E. Wilson, dated 19th June, 1794, Bridport Papers, vol. iv, British Museum.

Duke of Brunswick which assembled the allied forces to rescue the King and Queen of France from the Revolution, Rear-Admiral Sir John Jervis, K.B., member of Parliament for Great Yarmouth, was about to leave his house in Stanhope Street to set out to attend a whitebait party. With that brusque care for the young which always marked him, he composed a letter to his brother-in-law, Mr. Parker, whose eldest boy aged ten was anxious to enter the sea service. "With respect,"<sup>1</sup> he began, "to educating one of your sons for the Navy, I cannot possibly recommend it on the score of expense which daily experience convinces me will be too heavy for you. When you consider that I am approaching three score, and the small probability, from the aspect of foreign affairs of any warfare happening in my time, I think you will be of opinion with me that a worse profession cannot be chosen."

Nevertheless the boy persisted and the prophecies of peace were amply falsified. There is a letter preserved in this correspondence and marked by Mrs. Parker to whom it was addressed as "William's first letter just eleven years old." It was written in February, 1793, in the *Orion* 74 then lying in Spithead. "I have received one (a letter) from my aunt Heathcote to Captain Duckworth in which she has enclosed a guinea for me, which I shall give to Captain Duckworth as I have my other money as well as my watch and spy glass, which my father gave me and which Mr. Willes chose for me. Captain Duckworth is so good as to send for some plums and other good things for Messrs. Lane, Baker and me."

It is worth observing that William Parker was a child whose connections were most influential since he was a nephew of that rather dessicated severe lady Martha Jervis, later Countess of St. Vincent. None the less there is an engaging friendliness and a note of personal care which, while it recalls Nelson as Captain of the *Boreas*, does not suggest the dignified and gruelling misfortunes of the high eighteenth century. In a normally childish way young Parker referred to his captain as John Tommy. "Plums and good things," the very phrase opens a casement on to a Victorian childhood.

The *Orion* was in action on the first of June and the descriptions have a touch of the new century. "The French called us the 'little black ribband' as we have a black streak painted on our side." Again we are told of the French antagonist: "Their firing was not very

<sup>1</sup> Letter printed in *Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir William Parker*, by Rear-Admiral Augustus Phillimore, i, p. 6.



smart, though she contrived to send a red-hot shot into the captain's cabin where I was quartered, which kept rolling about and burning everybody when gallant Mears, our first lieutenant, took it up in his speaking trumpet and threw it overboard." The "gallant Mears" and the speaking trumpet, this is the world of Michael Scott and of *Tom Cringle's Log*. "The engagement," Parker explained<sup>1</sup> to his mother, "was the severest that ever was fought in the whole world. I do not cram you at all by telling you so."

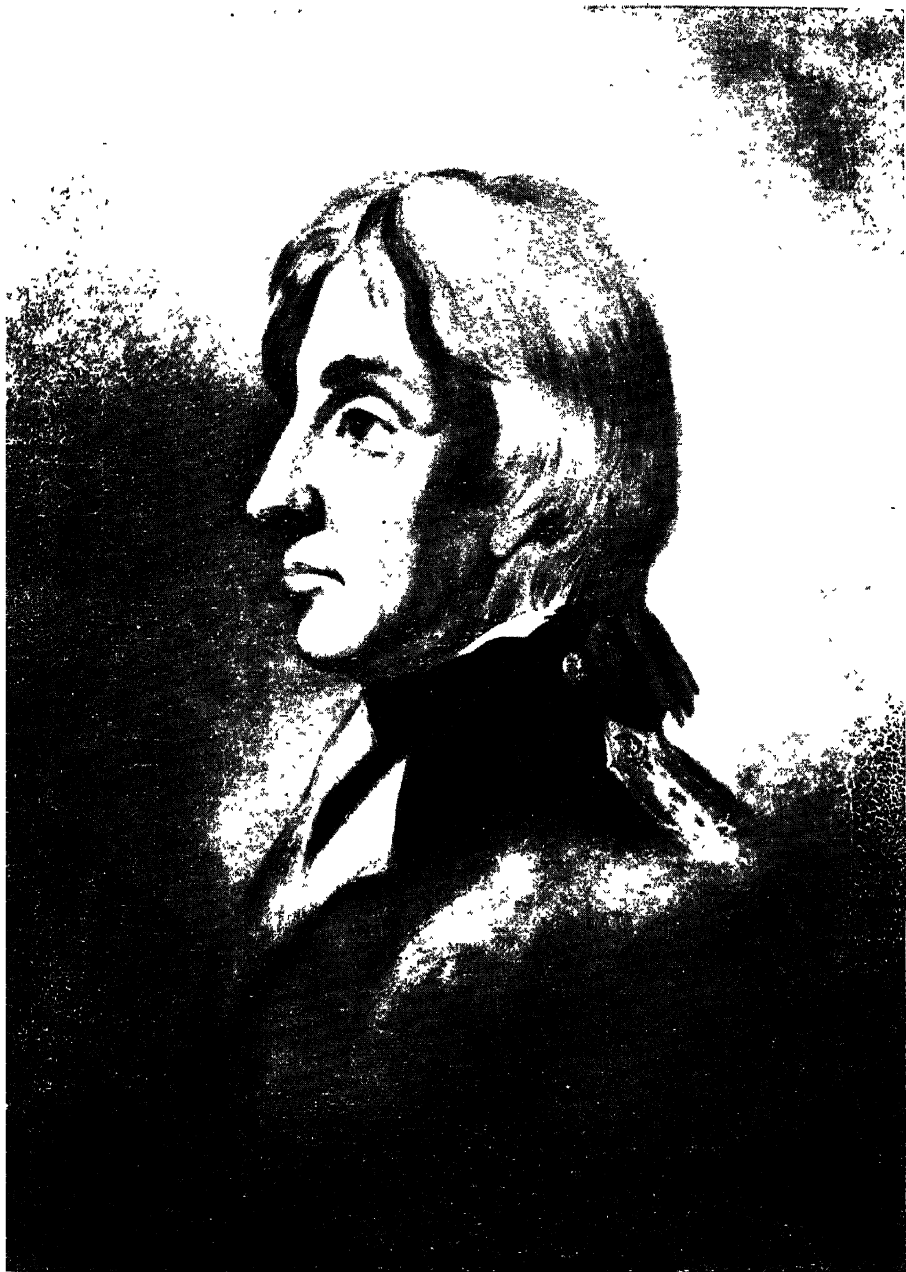
Duckworth hardly came into Nelson's world. He had had a relatively slow promotion and did not reach flag rank till after fifty, late for those days. Besides, he was about ten years older than the great admiral. At the same time his kindness to young Parker is reminiscent of Nelson without the inspiration. Still this episode will serve to introduce the case of William Hoste, who was perhaps the youngest of those post-captains in whom the unique commander lit a flame of clear devotion. Like Parker, his exact contemporary, he was twelve when he went to sea; at eighteen he was in command of the brig *Mutine*; at twenty-two a captain. He was only twenty-five in the year of Trafalgar and thirty-one when he gained his victory at Lissa. The well-known portrait brings back to us that slight strong sturdy figure; the young and ardent face; the dark thick tousled hair.

It was when Captain Nelson was commissioning the *Agamemnon* that he was approached by the great landowner, Mr. Coke of Holkham, and asked to take with him the young son of the latter's friend, the Rector of Godwick in Norfolk. He was a quick boy devoted to the Service and to the home which he was not to see again for ten long years. He was more mature than William Parker, who was to come under Nelson's influence when in the *Amazon*, and easy and able to express himself. It is interesting to watch how William Hoste's enthusiasm kindled for his great first captain.

In the early stages there are the apparently conventional references to Nelson's interest while he hopes that his father will get good sport from the May foxes. On arrival at Naples in September, 1793, the captain was "so kind as to present me with two orders of admission to the King's Museum and the ruins of Herculaneum." He was clearly homesick and Nelson would talk with this "Norfolk man" who came from his own background, clerical, rather sober, the Parson Woodforde world. There were other officers in the

<sup>1</sup> For this and earlier quotations, *ibid*, pp. 11-2, 45, 54-5.





HORATIO, VISCOUNT NELSON

*by Simon de Koster*

*Agememnon* from his own county, Weatherhead, a neighbouring rector's son, and Suckling. "I often think," wrote William to his mother, "I see you all sit down to dinner with the chair on the starboard side of my father left vacant, which used to be my place."

He followed Nelson from the *Agememnon* to the *Captain* and remained in the *Theseus* when the commodore was invalided home after the wound which he received at Santa Cruz. Weatherhead fell in that engagement and Hoste was made lieutenant in his stead. An interchange of letters will throw light on the new relationship with Nelson. "It is exactly seven years," wrote William Hoste, "since I left Godwick and, believe me, the whole time he has never altered his conduct with respect to me." "I have said," Sir Horatio wrote to Mr. Hoste, "so much of my dear William that I can only repeat his gallantry can never be exceeded and that each day rivets him more strongly to my heart." The third letter will complete the picture. "You may conceive,"<sup>1</sup> wrote the lieutenant to his father, "the happiness I felt on hearing of Lord Nelson's gallant affair. Was there ever such a man in our Navy before, or can you imagine there ever will be one to equal him? For my own part I think it impossible." These were not words that could have been written by or about Lords Howe and Rodney.

There is a constant interest in the question of Nelson's relations to his subordinates, the long balanced support that he would give and that sudden vehement appreciation. It seems that it was his preoccupation with the idea of "glory" which led to his immediate keen applause of each disinterested fine achievement. Even in the *Boreas* he had shown generosity and encouragement to the young, that quality was always with him. For the rest it was the actions which struck his glancing swift imagination that earned his praise. Thus he was enthusiastic over Admiral Duncan's victory at Camperdown, the work of an older man and a stranger.

Horatio Nelson was a coiner of phrases in the hour of victory. The actual expression "the band of brothers" dates from the battle of the Nile. It occurs in a letter to Lord Spencer. Very quickly the admiral would work up to his enthusiasms. The celebrated outpouring to Captain Blackwood is the classic example of this approach. "Is there a sympathy," he wrote,<sup>2</sup> "which ties men together in the

<sup>1</sup> This and the earlier letters quoted are printed in *Memoirs and Letters of Capt. Sir William Hoste, Bart., K.C.B., R.N.*, i, pp. 12, 16, 67, 108, 138 and 153.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Palermo, dated 8th April, 1800.

bonds of friendship without having a personal knowledge of each other? If so I was your friend and acquaintance before I saw you. Your conduct and character in the late glorious occasion stamps your fame beyond the reach of envy: it was like yourself—it was like the *Penelope*."

It was responsibility which brought to him his fire and certainty. He knew first that the *Agamemnon* would do so much and then the *Captain*. When he gained a detached squadron he extended his great expectations to every captain and ship in his command. He was both buoyant and grateful in good fortune. "I cannot," he wrote, "want to crop any man's laurel: the world has been over-bountiful to me." And then there comes that cry after the capture of the *Guillaume Tell*. "Not for all the world,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Nelson to Lord Spencer, "would I rob any man of a sprig of laurel—much less my children of the *Foudroyant*. I love her as fond father, a darling child, and glory in her deeds." This was the wine of the great period.

Yet Nelson himself had come but slowly to his vein. It is only in the Corsican operations of 1794 that he first seems to make use of the metaphor. "Laurels,"<sup>2</sup> he wrote to Sir Gilbert Elliot from the camp before Calvi, "grow in the Bay of Biscay—I hope a bed of them may be found in the Mediterranean." It was at this time, too, that his imagination came to endow his heroes with his attributes. He would coat with his own heightened ardent wishes the poised and tired careers of senior officers. An instance is his outlook on the great Lord Hood. It is worth examining this relationship in detail for it marks the change in Nelson's *tempo*.

There had been some contact between them in the West Indies when Nelson was a frigate captain. He had always admired the high technical abilities and the hard thrusting mind of his sharp senior. Still in the years on half-pay a certain bitterness developed. "Our familiar correspondence,"<sup>3</sup> wrote Nelson to the Duke of Clarence, "ceased on a difference of opinion." However, once he had joined Hood's fleet the attitude was easier.<sup>4</sup> "Found him very civil. I daresay I shall be good friends again." This was in June, 1793, and in quick stages, for Nelson's mind was always rapid, the tone grew warmer. In December the captain of the *Agamemnon* is found remark-

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated from Palermo, 5th April, 1800.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from the camp before Calvi, 4th August, 1794.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated from Burnham, 10th December, 1792, *Lord Nelson's Letters and Dispatches*, i, p. 294.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Mrs. Nelson dated off Cape St. Vincent, 14th June, 1793, *ibid*, i, p. 308.

ing,<sup>1</sup> "Lord Hood showed himself the same collected Good Officer which he always was." This is reasonable and almost too sedate in its expression; but by the winter's end Nelson had dramatised his old superior.

"I have just come,"<sup>2</sup> he wrote to Sir William Hamilton from the *Agamemnon* off Bastia, "from Lord Hood at Fiorenzo. His zeal, his activity for the honour and benefit of his King and Country are not abated. Upwards of seventy, he possesses the mind of forty years of age. He has not a thought separated from Honour and Glory." This surely is the mentality of Captain Nelson projected into the Viscount Hood. "May each opposer," he continues with that mounting emotional championship which was to become so soon familiar, "of such a character have for their accusers their own minds. I am sure that will be all sufficient."

This was the mould into which he poured his quick devotion. The situation was to be repeated with respect to Admiral Jervis. Nelson's character required a personal nexus with either his superior or his subordinates. Yet Hood was old and tired. Much as he appreciated Nelson, and there is ample evidence of his esteem, Hood's personality was singularly cool, objective and appraising. He was without Howe's high detachment; he lived for and by the Navy, and no man was more experienced in the long coiled history of service rivalries. "Have no jealousies, I beg of you," he wrote<sup>3</sup> to Nelson, "and avoid giving any most carefully." For himself Hood was determined on retirement if the Admiralty should send no reinforcements. The course of the Toulon operations and the Corsican affair, the capture of Bastia and Calvi, had not really brought him satisfaction.

It was Nelson's gift to endow those about him with his own energy. He drew out from men their high capacities provided always that they would operate within his clear magnetic field. He was loyal in his discipleship and to each feud. "Lord Howe," he wrote<sup>4</sup> about this time, "certainly is a great officer in the management of a fleet, but that is all. Lord Hood is equally great in all situations in which an admiral can be placed in." When Hood had returned to England in the *Victory* and had struck his flag, the captain of the *Agamemnon* uttered one of the best remembered of his

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mrs. Nelson dated 27th December, 1793, *ibid.*, i. p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 27th March, 1794, *ibid.*, i. p. 378.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from the *Victory*, dated 18th July, 1794, *ibid.*, i. p. 445.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 16th July, 1794, *ibid.*, i. p. 441.

*cris de coeur*. "Oh, miserable Board of Admiralty. They have forced the first officer in our service away from his command." This was a landmark in his life. He never would forsake Sir Samuel Hood.

The period of the attack on Calvi, in the course of which Captain Nelson lost the use of his right eye, provides the first indication of that self-confident quality in his desire for glory which so marked the great commander. He was unwilling to share his glory with an equal; he was the senior officer on the coast of Corsica and would remain so. "Too many captains," he wrote to Lord Hood from the camp before Calvi, "I have felt before are an inconvenience." These were the years of his gaining an unique confidence.

There was a sense in which Nelson's approach was always personal. He would sit in his cabin with the quill moving fast across the paper pouring out his views and quick reactions. His letters have a sameness whether they are sent to Mr. Suckling or to Captain Locker or to his brother William. He could not have thought much about his correspondents.

The campaign in the Mediterranean had been unfortunate. In the autumn of 1796 Corsica was evacuated in consequence of the French military victories. Nelson's relations with Hood's two successors, Vice-Admirals Hotham and Jervis, indicate his swiftly changing moods of gloom and fervour. It was the men, almost more than the measures, that he criticised. The fleet itself he always praised. "Indeed,"<sup>1</sup> he declared to the Duke of Clarence, "I believe the Mediterranean fleet is as fine a one as ever graced the ocean."

It was the same with the vignettes of action. The engagement in which the *Ça Ira* 80 was assailed by the *Agamemnon* provides an instance. The British sixty-four lay after the action in the Genoese harbour of Porto Specia, now better known as Spezia, under the scrub and the limestone rock in the March freshness. The captain settled to his correspondence. "The enemy,"<sup>2</sup> he wrote to William Suckling, "notwithstanding their red-hot shot and shells, must now be satisfied that England yet remains Mistress of the Seas. "Providence," he exclaimed to William Locker<sup>3</sup> "in a most miraculous manner preserving my poor brave fellows, who worked the ship in manœuvring about his (the *Ça Ira*'s) stern and quarters, with as much

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 15th July, 1795, *ibid*, ii, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 21st March, 1795, *ibid*, ii, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated 22nd March, 1795, *ibid*, ii, p. 22.

exactness as if she had been working into Spithead." "Fortune," he began to William Nelson,<sup>1</sup> "in this late affair has favoured me in an extraordinary manner by giving me an opportunity which seldom offers of being the only line-of-battleship who got singly into action on the 13th, when I had the honour of engaging the *Ça Ira* absolutely large enough to take *Agamemnon* in her hold. I never saw such a ship before."

The *Ça Ira* and *Censeur* were not in Nelson's view an adequate fruit of a fleet action, nor was the *Alcide*, which was the only capture in Hotham's second action on 13th July. "Hotham must get a new head;<sup>2</sup> no man's heart is better." And again, "the scrambling distant fire was a farce";<sup>3</sup> but he fell for Sir John Jervis.

The two men were unknown to one another save by reputation and the relationship between them was on the whole of an utilitarian character. It had nothing of the personal loyalty which marked the Hood-Nelson alliance; it was more professional and less enduring. The note on which it was to end is, curiously enough, struck in its beginnings when Nelson wrote with favourable intention that he had heard that Jervis was a "man of business."

"Sir John Jervis,"<sup>4</sup> he wrote to his wife in December, 1797, "arrived at St. Fiorenzo to the great joy of some and sorrow of others." Nothing indicates his feeling towards the commander-in-chief better than his reaction to the proposed evacuation. One can only guess what he would have said had this plan been mooted by Hotham. "We are all preparing," Nelson is found explaining in the following October,<sup>5</sup> "to leave the Mediterranean, a measure I cannot approve of." Yet in the same letter he continues. "Of all the fleets I ever saw, I never saw one in point of officers and men equal to Sir John Jervis's, who is a commander able to lead them to glory."

There are two other aspects of Commodore Nelson's life which should be touched on. He could win the enthusiastic loyal devotion of his officers and men, and earn the gratitude of old retired superiors. Lord Hood or Sir Peter Parker might foster one whom they had known in his youth. It was his contemporaries and the men a little

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 25th March, 1795, *ibid.* ii, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to William Suckling dated from Leghorn, 27th July, 1795, *ibid.* ii, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to the Rev. William Nelson, dated from the Gulf of Genoa 29th July, 1795, *ibid.* ii, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Letter, dated 2nd December, 1795, *ibid.* ii, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> Letter written about 17th October, 1796, *ibid.* ii, p. 291.



senior to him whom Nelson found difficult; if he could never learn to serve tranquilly with Hotham or Lord Keith, he could certainly never pacify Orde or Hyde Parker. It was a consequence of his approach that until the campaign of Trafalgar he tended to have the junior flag officers against him. This can partly be explained by one of his letters to his wife written from the *Agamemnon* when he was only forty-sixth on the list of captains. "If the folks," he began in reference to the Admiralty,<sup>1</sup> "will give me the colonelcy of Marines, I shall be satisfied; but I fear my interest is not equal to get it; although I will never allow that any man whatever has a claim superior to myself." This was surely hard upon his rivals.

Horatio Nelson could be acrid particularly to such a man as Hyde Parker, Hood's captain of the fleet, whom he disliked. "I assure you, sir," he wrote to him with temper,<sup>2</sup> "I never more regretted the not being able to divide the *Agamemnon*." It was not so much that he was caustic as that he offended by his ardent concentration upon his ship, and later his squadron, and their glory. There was, perhaps, more to admire in his equals and his juniors, and Nelson always felt for the small and dashing episode. At any rate the families of the men whom he contemned were unforgiving. Years afterwards Sir William Hotham remembering Nelson's treatment of his uncle gave vent to his distaste. "In his person Lord Nelson," he noted,<sup>3</sup> "was thin and had not much either the appearance or the manner of a gentleman." This is an inadequate description of one who was like mercury.

These, too, were the years of his unsatisfactory marriage. Admiral Hotham has observed coldly in regard to Lady Nelson,<sup>4</sup> "I remember her dancing a minuet with Captain Nelson of the *Boreas* at the island of Nevis previous to their marriage. Captain Nelson was in bad health and went home so ill that he had a puncheon of spirits for his body in case he should have died on the voyage." It was in 1787 that he had married Fanny Nisbet. "I am married,"<sup>5</sup> he told Captain Locker in a strange stilted letter that is worth recalling, "to an amiable woman, that far makes amends for everything. And I am morally certain she will continue to make me a happy man for the

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated from St. Fiorenzo, 12th April, 1795, *ibid*, ii, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 2nd December, 1795, *ibid*, ii, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> *The Private Papers of Sir William Hotham*, i, p. 243.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, ii, p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Letter dated from the *Boreas* on her passage to Tortola, 21st March, 1787, *Nelson's Letters and Dispatches*, i, p. 220.

rest of my days." "Morally certain," even on passage from his wedding he was not sure.

The half-pay years had proved a strain, taking eggs from birds' nests in the woods together. She was devoted to the Rector of Burnham Thorpe, "our father" as she styled him. Nelson wrote to her dutifully and often; he was sometimes urgent and invariably impersonal. His wife would move from Burnham Thorpe to Bath and then to Kentish Town to stay with William Suckling. The commodore's letters about his county, a shade pompous in regard to Lord Walpole and deferential when he mentions Mr. Coke, have that strange dimness which he could transmit to all that killed his interest.

Conventionally and without relish he wrote<sup>1</sup> of the time of his retirement. "However, I hope to save my pay, which, with a little addition, will buy us a very small cottage, where I shall be as happy as in a house as large as Holkham." The plan was pursued in a desultory fashion. When he was made a K.B. after Cape St. Vincent he spoke of purchasing a decent house near Norwich. This led his brother to propose a property for which Mr. Sigismund Trafford was entering upon negotiations. The idea was at once snuffed out. "Wroxham," replied Nelson,<sup>2</sup> "very far exceeds my purse." He did not return to Norfolk and assuredly he did not want to. It was in a letter to his wife that the captain of the *Agamemnon* made his first reference to Lady Hamilton. "She is," he declared in a now famous sentence,<sup>3</sup> "a young woman of amiable manners who does honour to the station to which she is raised." All his letters home seem to indicate that, whether he realised it or not, he could not be natural with Fanny Nelson. The *Agamemnon* was long overdue for her refit. Nelson, now in the *Captain*, followed his admiral outside the Straits. He would return in a happier year to glory and to Emma Hamilton.

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated off Minorca, 15th June, 1795, *ibid*, ii, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from Bath, 6th September, 1797, *ibid*, ii, p. 440.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated from Naples, 14th September, 1793, *ibid*, i, p. 326.

## *The Earl of St. Vincent*

A GREAT development in naval life can be dated from Sir John Jervis's command of the Mediterranean fleet. In some respects this famous admiral gave to the service what it most required; he was a great maintainer and re-creator of discipline. He came at a time when the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore were on the point of developing. Home-grown as they were, there was still the example of the Revolution to hearten their politically-minded leaders. With all his inflexibility on points of order and with a rather restricted imagination Sir John Jervis yet possessed the power to run discipline in a mould which would endure. His mind was singularly adapted to the needs of the routine of a nineteenth century sailing fleet. There is little doubt that Lord St. Vincent, as he would become, has left a clearer mark upon the Royal Navy than any of his contemporaries.

In the cases of both Howe and Rodney there was an element of detachment from the service which stood in contrast with that sharp meticulous concern for detail which distinguished the younger admiral. We can best obtain an impression of his character and of the nature of his influence by studying the situation in January, 1797, as Admiral Sir John Jervis paced the quarterdeck of his flagship the *Victory* while she lay at her moorings in Rosas Bay.

This was some fifteen months after he had led his fleet back to Gibraltar thus bringing to an end the *Agamemnon's* service within the Straits. He was at this time a man in late middle age, settled, determined and singularly successful. Already he was a full admiral, a rank to which Lord Nelson did not attain. Nothing had hitherto impeded a career which owed something to "interest" but very much more to a sterling and unrivalled professional merit. Jervis had early formed his powerful service friendships with Captain Barrington and Admiral Keppel. His father had been a friend and a distant connection of Lord Anson's. It is worth noting that Jervis had not known, and until he became first Lord of the Admiralty he never was to know, a personal failure.

His fortune made forward like a flowing tide, His reflections and his firm decisions were crystal clear, while his mind held the sureness

and the lucidity of the high eighteenth century. Behind lay an immense experience; forty years of naval service. He had been with Wolfe in his attack upon the Heights of Abraham.

There he stood a fine figure of a man of sixty on his quarterdeck in the winter sun; the blue eyes set in that composed visage; the hat raised above his head when he was speaking. The habit of command was second nature; the area of knowledge was exact and multifarious. With that perfect assurance he was inevitably a little grim. "He was," wrote Hotham in a pointed comment, "in Parliament and Lord Shelburne was his friend. In his person," he went on,<sup>1</sup> "Lord St. Vincent had very much the appearance of a man of rank, and wore the decoration of the Order of the Bath more frequently than the generality of those who had it."

His political convictions were secure. He adhered to the Whigs with whom he acted. Admiral Saunders had first introduced him to a way of thinking which was to prove intimately congenial. He had a great acquaintance with the coasts of Europe. "You will find," he wrote to Captain Tyler,<sup>2</sup> "good anchorage, in an easy depth of water, from Ancona all along the Popish and Venetian territory." He had paid long visits to France and the French aroused in him a measured disapprobation. He had a real and paraded knowledge of their language. "Manners *ennuyant*, *aborde* gracious," he wrote in reference to the Court of Catherine II. In contrast his sternness would at times reflect itself in brutal phrasing.

An expression which he made use of in submitting a sketch of a<sup>3</sup> peace establishment to Lord Spencer in 1797 is singularly revealing. He is speaking of the post of commander-in-chief on his new station. "The Mediterranean should always have an officer of splendour." This conception of his almost viceregal responsibilities sat heavy on him. He looked at the work of the Foreign Office and saw it was not good. "Your Lordship will perceive,"<sup>4</sup> he explained to the same first Lord, "how very unfit the ablest of the *Corps Diplomatique* are to negotiate with barbarians."

Sir John Jervis excelled at the small keen detail. "I think," he

<sup>1</sup> *Hotham Papers*, ii, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Captain Tyler dated from the *Victory* off Toulon, 2nd August, 1796, and printed in *Memoirs of Admiral the Right Hon. the Earl of St. Vincent, G.C.B.*, by Jedediah Stephens Tucker, i, o. 200.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum dated from the *Ville de Paris* at anchor off Rota, 30th June, 1797, *ibid*, i. o. 418.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Earl Spencer dated from the *Victory* off Toulon, 25th August, 1796, *ibid*, i, p. 206.

explained to Captain Nelson,<sup>1</sup> "the lemons high. I, the other day, purchased of a Dane, who loaded them, at nineteen livres the case. Go on and prosper." Both sides of Jervis's personality stand revealed in a letter of complaint addressed to the Secretary of the Admiralty. It concerns the acts of two contractors to the fleet, Mr. Porter and Mr. Huddart. "The former of these gentlemen," Sir John declared,<sup>2</sup> "being considered the most astute character in Italy, I was very early on my guard against his designs, and soon after my being at Leghorn, having fathomed his depth in treating of a bread contract, I determined never to have another transaction with him." In consequence Jervis withdrew the contract for supplying cattle; but Huddart's friends were powerful and included Mr. Wyndham, the senior English diplomat. "This," concluded the Admiral, "is not the only time his Majesty's Minister in the Court of Florence has ventured to travel out of the road to answer the purposes of these gentlemen." It is an interesting letter, with its underlined menace.

To the captains in his great fleet Sir John Jervis showed a loyalty which was calm and unemotional. There were eventually twenty-five ships of the line and thirty frigates. Besides the *Victory*, four other first or second-rates wore the flags of admirals, Linzee, Mann, Hyde Parker and Waldegrave. A letter to the Admiralty sets the tone of his approach. "Freemantle, Tyler, Morris, George Hope, Bowen or Miller," he writes of his captains,<sup>3</sup> "are excellent examples for young men. Circumstanced as I am," he goes on, "I could not avoid making Nelson an established commodore." And then there came the gale warning. "The disorder on board the *Britannia* was nothing like a mutiny, having originated entirely with the notorious imbecility of (Sir Charles Knowles) *a propos* there are too many such in the command of line-of-battleships."

In all respects Admiral Jervis's ideas were singularly orderly and concise. He was a great maker of fleets and *personnel* and bases. His mind is in some ways closer to us than that of other eighteenth century flag officers. A power of defined generalisation links his thought with the Victorian certitudes. In this connection it is worth quoting some of the judgments<sup>4</sup> embodied in his sketch of a peace establishment. They give insight into a point of view which was very positive, hard and self-confident.

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated from the *Victory* off Toulon, 31st July, 1796, *ibid*, i, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from the *Victory* off Toulon, 24th September, 1796, *ibid*, i, pp. 209-10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, i, p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum, *ibid*, i, p. 418.

"*Yachts*. Should be sold as totally worthless, tending to nothing but corrupt sinecures, too often given to worthless officers. The King's cutters should also be disposed of." "Cutters," he wrote<sup>1</sup> on another occasion in reference to their war-time use, "are the ruin and destruction of every lieutenant who is put into them; the masters of hired ones always conduct them best."

"*Transport Board*. Of no use whatever. I say nothing of Newfoundland because it seems a proper provision for a needy and a meritorious officer." His ideas on naval construction were swiftly given.

"*Size of ships*. *Ville de Paris* ne plus ultra of first-rates.

*Victory* (a ship of 100 guns built in 1765) a fine model for ships of 98 guns.

*Carnatic* the standard of 74 guns.

Frigates are grown preposterous. I never wish to see one larger than the *Inconstant*." Time and again one is reminded of Lord Fisher, the biblical vigour; the decision; the belief that opposition would in time collapse like paper walls.

He was at one with the high officers who intimidate those whom they do not compel to admiration. It seems that criticism of his ideas was not expressed to him; the wheels of his denunciation ground forward on their heavy flanges. "*Guardships*," he wrote of the vessels which acted as base headquarters, "so infamously rotten and corrupt as to have sown the seeds of all the theft, false musters, etc. The annihilation of this establishment becomes absolutely necessary." A parallel example can be selected from an earlier letter. "In many instances,"<sup>2</sup> he explained to the Secretary of the Admiralty when writing on the failure of the lower masts, "the best fibres of the stick are cut away in order to form the mast according to a very absurd rule by which the mastmakers are governed. I have long," he declared with rising temper, "been of the opinion that many insufficient men are employed in our masthouses." His innate force drove him on; he was permanently dissatisfied with his material.

The admiral lived for and by the Navy and was ready almost to extinguish the sister service. "*Marines*," he noted,<sup>3</sup> for he placed great reliance on the sea regiment, "a very considerable corps should be kept up, and I hope to see the day when there is not another foot

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 436.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from the *Victory* off Toulon, 3rd September, 1796, *ibid*, i, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum, *ibid*, i, p. 418.

soldier in the Kingdom, in Ireland or the colonies, except the King's guard and artillery. The colonels of regiments," he went on blandly, "might be provided for during their lives by annuities equal to their present pay and emoluments." In the great cabin of the *Ville de Paris* his secretary drove a quill at his instructions; but the secretary was a cypher, a servant. He was in no position to prune his master's mind, to let in reason.

This episode has interest for it shows that outside his own field Sir John Jervis lacked the faculty of self-criticism, nor had he a friend to aid him. In all sea affairs he was decisive, sharp and gifted with a self-reliance which was inexhaustible. There is a salt tang in his abrupt quick phrasing. "There are," he wrote to the captain of the *Hamadryad*, "men enough to be got at Gibraltar, and you and your officers would be much better employed in picking them up than laying upon your backs and roaring like bull calves." "The discipline and subordination of the Navy," he wrote at the time of the mutinies, "was shook to the foundation by the Grenville Act which transferred the command of the fleet from the officers to whores, landlords, crimps and lastly to United Irishmen." Another phrase lights up his cheerful attitude towards the Admiralty, "who, God knows, are very unfit to advise in any measure beyond the selection of men for Greenwich Hospital." An expression, which recurs more than once, defines his approach towards the seamen of the fleet. "We are carrying on the most active desultory war against the port and town of Cadiz to divert the animal." But the mutinies were in the future, the sequel to his great victory. At present the commander-in-chief concentrated on the building of Gibraltar as a naval base.

From his papers we can perceive the close attention which he bent upon each detail. The Mediterranean command is of the more significance in St. Vincent's life because his earlier career is not well documented. His biographer Mr. Tucker has explained that the admiral lost his memoranda and his letter books and years of collated correspondence when his flagship the *Boyne* was burned to the water's edge in Spithead in 1795 on her return from the West Indies. It is well to focus upon Gibraltar.

The work went fast; the two pits for careening were kept in good repair; baths were built at the Naval Hospital; tanks were arranged beneath the eight gun battery. Plans were laid for watering the fleet in Rosas Bay more expeditiously; the approach to the

Ragged Staff was deepened. Masters and commanders of vessels were to attend there, in a rota arranged in seniority, to see that ships' boats kept their proper turns and that all was in order. Down the stairway to the Ragged Staff by the harbourside there poured the troops of Spanish workmen. Already each battleship sent ashore a "complete, steady, sober shipwright" to work in the dockyard, the men being victualled and sleeping in the *Diadem*. Over all the admiral appointed as boatswain of the establishment Joaquim (later known as Joe King), "a Portugal then boatswain of the *Captain*." He had served with Commodore Nelson for many years and was conversant with the language spoken by the caulkers and labourers of Gibraltar yard. Beneath the admiral's eyes there went forward the repairing and perfecting of the fleet.

St. Vincent had, too, a sense of stagecraft and stage management. We find in him again that careful "arranged" carriage of the Georgian flag officer, that manner of the Court which was to be blown away for ever by Nelson's spontaneity and its deep influence. An episode relating to the background of the battle of Cape St. Vincent throws light upon this trait. The evening before the battle, relates Jedediah Tucker, the admiral brought Lord Mark Kerr, then in command of the *Fortune* brig, into the stern gallery of the flagship. Pointing thence to the fleet, he said<sup>1</sup>: "Notwithstanding the disparity of force, my dear Lord Mark, with such stuff as I have about me, I shall attack them, and England shall hear of them; and should it be at daylight, or during a fog, I will bring you a seventy-four gun ship into Lisbon." After his victory on arriving off the bar of the Tagus he again led Kerr into the stern gallery and offered him the *San Ysidro*.

The *San Ysidro*; it sounds delightful, the gift from heaven, the dialogue between the admiral and this young officer of twenty. The offer had in fact a clear premeditated character which recalls Lord Chesterfield's precepts on courtesy. Rather over a month earlier Sir John had written in the following terms to Evan Nepean.<sup>2</sup> "I am pledged to Lady Louisa Lennox and to Lord Hugh Seymour to give the first vacancy to Lord Mark Kerr." St. Vincent with his old tired wisdom and his hard good humour was always alive to the great world.

In general the atmosphere was dry and the temperature was low

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Lord Mark Kerr to Sir William Parker printed in Tucker, op. cit. i. p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from the *Victory* in the Tagus, 29th December, 1796, *ibid*, i. p. 281.



within the admiral's neighbourhood. The long stiff courtesy and scheduled outburst must have done much to rile Horatio Nelson. St. Vincent's affection was controlled and channelled; it seems to have been reserved for Thomas Troubridge. In this one case he could approach to Nelson's attitude. "Captain Troubridge<sup>1</sup> . . . the ablest and best executive officer in His Majesty's naval service, with honour and courage as bright as his sword." This is one of the few sentences written by the older admiral which his famous junior might have minted.

In the matter of his personal staff St. Vincent was inclined to take what came. He cared greatly for efficiency and little for congenial companionship. George Grey, who was his flag captain, had been an old tried comrade, but he had little in common with his captain of the fleet Robert Calder except that they were both disciplinarians. In regard to some of the duties of a captain of the fleet Jervis at Cape St. Vincent, like Howe on the First of June, was not well served. Captain Calder was well known in the service as a conscientious, somewhat hen-pecked officer. "Mrs. Calder,"<sup>2</sup> writes Commander Gardner in an account of his commission in the *Barfleur*, "was very fond of boat sailing, and we had a large double banked cutter in which she would go to Spithead when blowing very fresh, and carrying sail as if in chase until the boat's gunwale was under, so that every one thought she was mad." One never gets a sense of intimacy on the quarterdeck of the *Victory* as long as she wore St. Vincent's flag. With this background we can proceed to examine some of the aspects of the battle which earned for Admiral Sir John Jervis the title by which he is always known.

In the first place it seems surprising that such solid attention was paid to the naval power of Spain. In spite of the excellence of their warship design and construction the Spanish naval strength was never handled in such a fashion as to constitute a serious menace. The *guerre de course*, which the French squadrons found so profitable, never formed part of Spanish naval policy, and it was partly in consequence of this decision that we do not find those frigate actions and single ship encounters in which the French and English proved such equal combatants. Although the Crown of Spain possessed Cuba and Hispaniola, as well as the whole continental land mass of

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Lord Spencer, dated from the *Ville de Paris* off Cadiz, 22nd May, 1797, *ibid*, i, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Recollections of James Anthony Gardner*, Naval Records Society, p. 109.

America from Florida and California southwards except Brazil, her ministers had never followed a West Indian naval policy. The sea establishment in those waters was inert and dull in contrast to the nervous febrile activity of the French Ministry of Marine in whose conceptions Martinique would play so great a part.

In addition there was a special reason which reduced the effective fighting strength of the Spanish fleet. The whole current of national feeling was opposed to that subordinate alliance with the French revolutionary power which Charles IV and his minister Manuel de Godoy Prince of the Peace pursued intermittently. The flame of Spanish patriotism would be manifest in the war of liberation against the French after Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808. Till then there was no heart in the war; the fleet took the minimum of action which was compatible with the French alliance. Victory it did not envisage. Time and again it is apparent that the real concern was always that the officers and men of individual line-of-battleships should acquit themselves with credit in the conflicts which high foreign policy would force upon them. It is not too much to say that there was almost a cult of the glory of Spanish arms in sea defeat.

This was the situation on 13th February, 1797, when the sloop *Bonne Citoyenne* rejoined Sir John Jervis with the news that a large Spanish fleet had come westwards through the Straits. She had been in contact with them the same morning. The frigate *Minerve* carrying the broad pendant of Commodore Nelson re-joined the fleet at the same time on her way home from the Mediterranean after removing the remaining naval stores from Elba. After passing Cartagena the *Minerve* had been followed by the Spanish vessels. These latter were in fact a fleet of twenty-five line-of-battleships which had been operating for some time with the French squadrons in Toulon and was now returning to Cadiz. They were under the command of Don José de Cordova and the prevailing winds now forced them out to the Atlantic. The British were doubtful as to their number and as to whether they had any of the French Toulon fleet in company.

These Spanish movements were part of a grand design in which the French, Dutch and Spanish fleets would ultimately unite at Brest to cover an invasion of England. The battle of Cape St. Vincent would never have taken place but for the fact that the Spaniards were driven to the westward. It was only during the night of 13th-

14th February that the easterly gales gave place to the light winds from east south east which characterised the day of the engagement. The Spanish admiral had received information that the British force had been reduced to ten sail of the line. This had indeed been its strength some few weeks earlier, but a reinforcement of five battleships had reached Sir John Jervis from England on February 6th. The well authenticated exchange between the commander-in-chief and Captain Calder on the quarterdeck of the *Victory* on the morning of the engagement indicates the dearth of information. "There are twenty sail of the line, Sir John," the captain of the fleet reported. "Very well, sir." "There are twenty-seven sail, Sir John." "Enough sir, no more of that. The die is cast and if there are fifty sail I will go through them."

The battle itself has been overestimated. The sharp fighting did not last long. The first shot was fired at 11.31 and the fleets began an indecisive action after the eighteenth century pattern by passing on different tacks. Commodore Nelson in the *Captain*, to which ship he had transferred his broad pendant, ordered his vessel to be wore at 12.50. He thus acted independently and brought his ship to the head of the Spanish line. The fierce part of the engagement was over by four o'clock. All firing ceased at five. It was in fact a battle within a battle. Thus the greater part of the few British casualties occurred in the *Captain*, in the *Culloden* and *Blenheim* which followed in her wake and in the *Prince George* which bore up to her assistance. Fifty-four out of the total of seventy-three British seamen killed belonged to those four ships. Eleven men were killed in Captain Collingwood's ship the *Excellent* during her duel with the *Santissima Trinidad*. One man was killed on board the *Victory*.

Nelson's own account is worth quoting in some detail on account of the light that it throws on certain characteristics of the fighting. "I ordered," so the report begins,<sup>1</sup> "the ship to be wore, and passing between the *Diadem* and *Excellent* at a quarter-past one o'clock, was engaged with the headmost and of course leewardmost of the Spanish division." After describing the situation of the other vessels the commodore explains that he decided to lay himself alongside the *San Nicolas* 74 on whose quarter the *San Josef* was entangled. As the details make clear Nelson's own ship had been severely damaged.

"At this time," the report continues, "the *Captain* having lost her fore topmast, not a sail, shroud or rope left, her wheel shot away and

<sup>1</sup> Nelson's *Letters and Dispatches*, ii, pp. 342-3.



A SHIP ON THE STOCKS AT DEPTFORD  
*from the Collection*



incapable of further service in the line or in chase, I directed Captain Miller to put the helm a-starboard and, calling for boarders, ordered them to board.

"The soldiers of the 69th Regiment were amongst the foremost on this service. The first man who jumped into the enemy's mizzen chains was Captain Berry, late my first lieutenant. He was supported from our spritsail yard which locked in the mizzen rigging. A soldier of the 69th Regiment, having broke the upper quarter gallery window, jumped in, followed by myself and others as fast as possible. I found the cabin doors fastened, and some Spanish officers fired their pistols: but having broken open the doors, the soldiers fired, and the Spanish brigadier fell, as retreating to the quarterdeck, on the larboard side, near the wheel. Having pushed on the quarterdeck, I found Captain Berry in possession of the poop, and the Spanish ensign hauling down.

"At this moment a fire of pistols or muskets opened from the admiral's stern gallery of the *San Josef*. I directed the soldiers to fire into her stern, and, calling to Captain Miller, ordered him to send some more men into the *San Nicolas*, and directed my people to board the first rate (the *San Josef*) which was done in one instant, Captain Berry assisting me into the main chains. At this moment a Spanish officer looked over the quarterdeck rail and said they surrendered."

There is a strange vivid effect in all this breathless narrative. Some points stand out; the rôle of the soldiers, who would soon disappear; the personal action of the commodore; the entry through the quarter gallery; the impression almost of house-breaking as they laid open the Spaniard's deck plan. The casualties were light beyond belief. According to the *Captain's* log seventeen out of her total of twenty-four men lost in action were slain in the period of close engagement before the boarding of the *San Nicolas*. The enemy's ships were thus carried almost without loss. Moreover they were carried very swiftly. At the most only fifteen minutes passed between the time that the *San Nicolas* was boarded and the surrender of both vessels. Nelson's account does not allow for the effect of the fire from the *Prince George* in bringing about the destruction of the fighting power of these two Spanish ships. Altogether four prizes were taken, *San Josef* 112, *Salvador del Mundo* 112, *San Nicolas* and *San Ysidro*. The rest of the Spanish fleet reached Cadiz.

Captain Calder is said to have been responsible for the very

general terms in which the action was described in Jervis's dispatch. Certainly the gradual rift between the commander-in-chief and Nelson is first perceptible after this time. Before the battle letters had been sent from England to tell Jervis that the King had raised him to the peerage and Nelson of his promotion to rear-admiral. The latter was made a K.B. for his share in the action and Jervis received an earldom. He wished for the title of Yarmouth, which he represented in the House of Commons, or else Orford because it had been conferred on Admiral Russell. Neither title was at that time free. George III himself chose the style Earl of St. Vincent.

From the period of this battle two trends derive. The first is the suppression in the Mediterranean fleet of that spirit of mutiny which had spread from the outbreaks at St. Helen's and the Nore. The second is Nelson's independent command which led to the battle of the Nile.

In so far as there was rigidity in St. Vincent's command it arose from his determination to suppress all disaffection. He has left no statement of his view of the conduct of the Admiralty in dealing with the Mutinies. It was not for him to criticise but to maintain. He berthed the marines separately from the seamen and did everything to make the discipline of the fleet hinge upon them. Communication between ship and ship was much discouraged and was particularly forbidden in the case of vessels newly come from England. In all this he showed a certain Georgian high-mindedness. Two examples will indicate this quality.

When the *Alcmene* joined his fleet it was discovered that she carried inflammatory appeals from the mutineers at the Nore to the ship's company of the *Barfleur*. It was suggested that they might be withholden. "Certainly not, sir," replied the admiral,<sup>1</sup> "let every letter be immediately delivered: I dare to say the commander-in-chief will know how to support his own authority." Again when the crew of the *Romulus* became refractory her captain enforced obedience but promised that by a certain date the ship should go home to England. St. Vincent ratified the promise, but the day before the *Romulus* sailed for England he drafted every man out of her and sent in another crew. The mind is well prepared for the stories of St. Vincent's execution of mutineers.

"The officers," he wrote to Nelson on one occasion,<sup>2</sup> "were to

<sup>1</sup> Tucker's *Memoirs of Earl St. Vincent*, i, pp. 300-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, i, p. 338.

have been massacred, and if the ships from Ireland, with the *London* and *Hecla* had joined, I was to have been hung." Again he is found writing to the Admiralty,<sup>1</sup> "The *Diadem*, spiritedly commanded, has a dirty blackguard crew, who have gone some lengths, but are kept down with a tight hand." The whole situation made him acrid. "The commander-in-chief having seen several officers of the fleet on shore dressed like shopkeepers in coloured clothes . . ." so runs the opening paragraph of one order.<sup>2</sup> This is very far from the spirit of the Nile, and with it there went a certain view, imperial and pro-consular. He knew he must maintain his own great state. "I shall," he wrote to Don José de Mazzaredo in regard to some Spanish officers, "be totally regardless of the judgment of her most faithful Majesty, or of any other Sovereign on earth except my own, in my treatment of them, should they fall into my hands acting in violation of that sacred engagement."

The *Victory* had gone home and the admiral's flag now flew in the *Ville de Paris*. Nelson was back in England after the loss of his arm at Santa Cruz. The eighteenth century was drawing to a close and in certain aspects St. Vincent was the last survival from the age of reason. He belonged to that old high school in naval and military affairs of those who tend to ignore the individual. Nelson would not have written of the "dirty blackguard crew." It was both a drawback and an asset that Lord St. Vincent's character was so easily comprehended.

The old admiral was to live on until 1821, but there are two phases of his later life which should here be recalled. It is to him that we owe the classic formula for close investment. After his return from the Mediterranean he had taken the responsibility for the blockade of Brest from the lax control of old Lord Bridport and the easy tradition of Lord Howe.

In the early months of 1800, after his treatment at Bath for a dropsical complaint, St. Vincent had hoisted his flag once more in the *Ville de Paris*. The picture is very much one of that series of grand Channel fleets which now were passing. A vast assemblage of ordered force always appealed to Lord St. Vincent; he had no fear of the cumbersome. Here he had forty line-of-battleships and five supporting admirals, Gardner, Collingwood, Berkeley, Whitshed and Cotton. A rather undistinguished list of captains included, however, Stopford, Saumarez, Foley, Strachan, the elder Cochrane

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 324.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid, i, p. 427.



and Pellew. Troubridge was captain of the fleet. A memory of the feud between Bridport, then Alexander Hood, and Keppel lingered. The senior officers' impression of their new commander was both clear-cut and unpleasing. It is not surprising that St. Vincent was not made welcome. With old age his firmness had become a shade more drastic, still more unrelenting. It was now upon them.

One of the captains had given in Lord Bridport's presence the toast, "May the discipline of the Mediterranean never be introduced into the Channel fleet." This hope, proclaimed in such an unseemly fashion, was wholly vain. As St. Vincent's biographer explains, the old easy days were over. "The rendezvous was changed to 'Well in with Ushant with an easterly wind.'" As long as the wind was blowing from that quarter a squadron of five line-of-battleships was always kept at anchor in the bay of Brest with three sail of the line cruising in support of them.

In vain the admiral sought for Hallowell, Darby and Hood, "my old Mediterranean friends." They were away off Toulon with the remaining vessels of his old command, "the finest fleet that the sea ever carried." Jedediah Tucker describes an episode as told him by his father the admiral's secretary. One cold blowing dark November night when the flagship plunged off Ushant the signal was made "to tack in succession." The veteran commander-in-chief was found in the darkness at the farther end of the stern gallery "standing in only his flannel dressing-gown and cocked hat, watching the movements of his fleet." He knew that there he would be unobserved. "Hush, sir! hush,"<sup>1</sup> replied the admiral when urged to move to a more sheltered spot, "I want to see how the evolution is performed in *such* a night of weather, and to know whether Jemmy (Captain Vashon of the *Neptune*, the second astern of the *Ville de Paris*) is on deck." This enables us to understand the key passage in a letter<sup>2</sup> written to Thomas Grenville some years later. "The present order of cruising before Brest requires that the fleet should be tacked or wore at least once in the night during an easterly wind, which few flag officers can endure." This last clause is significant.

It is not his period as first Lord of the Admiralty which brings St. Vincent vividly before us so much as these two final phases of his sea command. He was to have the Channel fleet again in the months after Trafalgar. By then Pitt his enemy would be dead and

<sup>1</sup> Tucker *Memoirs of Earl St. Vincent*, ii, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from Rame House, 16th November, 1806, *ibid*, ii, p. 312.

he was content to fly his flag once more. His letters still convey the old impression of taut crabbed honesty and of a Fisher-like delight in pyrotechnics. Like so many great administrators he loved a phrase. "The *Penelope*," he wrote<sup>1</sup> in allotting to that frigate the inshore station by the Black Rocks off Ushant, "is destined to relieve Captain Rathbourne for those who loiter in port must have Siberia." It was to Admiral Markham, a Lord of the Admiralty and his disciple, that the letters of this last period went. It is wonderful how perfectly they mirror St. Vincent's carefree, hard, unbuttoned age.

"For God's sake," he wrote again, from the *Hibernia*, his new flagship then off Ushant,<sup>2</sup> "put Lord Howick (the new first Lord) upon his guard against the awful presumptuous proceedings of Tom Wolley. He is the meanest thief in the whole profession, abounding as it still does with Cape Bar men." He never could relish civilian colleagues. Always he forged his own links of friendship and of enmity. There is a touch of emotion as he writes<sup>3</sup> of his two friends Markham and Tucker, "the two men most attached to me and whom I never will abandon." The last words have almost a reflection of Nelson's warmth until we recollect that Lord St. Vincent was expending his emotion on an alliance.

Beyond all these, there is one letter which seems to ring down the curtain on the admiral's thought. Penned in his flagship off Ushant, he sums up the great passing generation. "The *Egyptienne*,"<sup>4</sup> he begins fairly quietly, "carried out five topmasts to Admiral Harvey's squadron the other day, and if we continue to throw away topmasts at this rate the forests of the north will not furnish an adequate supply. There is," he continues, "a great lack of seamanship in the service, and the young people now growing up are for the most part frippery and gimcrack. I wish we could revive the old school." Then the mood fell from him and he was his own fierce self again. "When the *Latona* is repaired and manned, send her to the coast of Guinea for she is fit for nothing else."

The admiral was now seventy-one and this command only endured some fourteen months. He had always said that he would go with a change in the administration for it was not in Lord St.

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated from the *Hibernia* near Ushant, 10th April, 1806, *Selections from the Correspondence of Admiral John Markham*, Navy Records Society, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 7th May, 1806, *ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated from the *Hibernia* off Ushant, 14th October, 1806, *ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated from the *Hibernia* near Ushant, 22nd May, 1806, *ibid.*, p. 52.

Vincent to continue to serve under a Board controlled by Tories. On 24th April, 1807, he hauled down his flag for the last time. He noted with disapprobation the names of the naval members of the Board who signed this order. The senior was Lord Gambier. The concluding words of St. Vincent's letter to the faithful Tucker are much in character. The admiral had placed them in italics. *I mean to be very prompt in my obedience.*

There was happiness in his years of retirement at Rochetts, his country place in Essex. St. Vincent was deeply generous to those within his orbit; he was both staunch and easy. Tucker describes his great anxiety when Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Troubridge disappeared in his flagship in the Indian Ocean. "Oh, *Blenheim*, *Blenheim*, where are you ?"

## *The Nile*

AS THE WAR gained momentum it increased in range and scope. In a very different fashion from previous conflicts ship actions took place across the world. The note of leisure which had characterised the eighteenth century wars was dissipated; the France of the Republic and the Empire like the Germany of the Second and Third Reich imparted to the struggle a swift dynamic energy.

Perhaps the greatest period in the history of the Royal Navy was that covered by those eight years of the mid-wartime from the battle of Cape St. Vincent, where Nelson first showed his qualities as admiral, until the victory of Trafalgar. These years included the battle of the Nile, that perfect action, the engagement at Copenhagen and the most severe portion of the long blockade of the French harbours. They were punctuated by the fourteen months uneasy truce which followed upon the Peace of Amiens.

This space of time was marked in the naval life by the quality of diversity, a richness of experience. England was now first conscious of the empire which she had gathered. Questions of convoy gained a fresh importance; as armed merchantmen the East Indiamen had reached their last development. An element of co-ordination, painful and cumbersome, was at length achieved. The *personnel* had reached those great figures which would be maintained for nearly twenty years. In 1798 the number voted for the Navy was one hundred thousand seamen and twenty thousand marines; twelve years later the seamen would reach the peak figure of one hundred and forty-five thousand. There would then be over six hundred naval vessels in commission. All this great organisation must be borne in mind when we consider Sir Horatio Nelson's first victory.

We always think of Nelson as acting swiftly and never more so than before the Nile and also before Trafalgar. His independent service in the Mediterranean brought into being the band of brothers. The chase and search for the French Toulon fleet and its destruction in the bay of Aboukir displayed the admiral in that nervous flame-like tension which set him so far apart from his contemporaries. Only four and a half months separated the sailing of the *Vanguard* from St. Helen's, flying Sir Horatio Nelson's flag and with Edward

Berry as his flag captain, from the completion of his perfect victory.

By the beginning of May, 1798, he had passed through into the Mediterranean with three ships of the line in company and on June 7th was joined by Troubridge off Cape Corse with reinforcements which brought his command to fourteen battleships. Nelson owed this large force to the foresight of Lord St. Vincent who still commanded on that station. His opportunity was however made by General Bonaparte who was now recognised as the military saviour of the French Republic. On May 19th the Toulon fleet set sail escorting the *Armée de l'Est* whose commander was instructed to take possession of Egypt, to chase the English from all their strongholds in the East that he could reach and in particular to destroy all their *comptoirs* in the Red Sea. In numbers the fleets were not unequal, the French comprising thirteen line-of-battleships. Sir Horatio Nelson's duty was extremely simple, to seek out the enemy and utterly destroy him.

The early summer was thus occupied by the search for the French fleet which had slipped away and carried General Bonaparte to Alexandria. There were anxious weeks before the British found them. It is from this period that there date so many of Nelson's famous sayings. There is his phrase to Sir William Hamilton written<sup>1</sup> at the beginning of the chase off the Faro of Messina. "But not a moment must be lost—it can never be regained." "Figure to yourself," he wrote to Lady Nelson,<sup>2</sup> "a vain man on Sunday evening at sunset, walking in his cabin with a squadron about him, who looked up to their chief to lead them to glory."

Besides this one perennial theme, Nelson's mind ranged the whole area of naval conflict. "I shall never feel secure till Mangalore,<sup>3</sup> and all Tippoo's sea coast is in our possession." He was already gathering his band about him, Saumarez, Troubridge, Ball and Darby, "those captains in whom I place great confidence."<sup>4</sup> These men whom he mentioned first would not always be his intimates.

On 22nd June he had missed the French fleet beyond Malta and his search was narrowing down to the eastern Mediterranean. "I could not think,"<sup>5</sup> he wrote to Lord St. Vincent who was then outside

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated from the *Vanguard*, 20th June, 1798, Letters and Dispatches, iii, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from the *Vanguard* off Island of St. Peter's in Sardinia, 24th May, 1798, *ibid.*, iii, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to George Baldwin, dated 24th June, 1798, *ibid.*, iii, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 29th June, 1798, *ibid.*, iii, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of the same date, *ibid.*, iii, p. 40.

the Straits, "(any place to the westward) their destination, for at this season the westerly winds so strongly prevail between Sicily and the coast of Barbary that I conceive it almost impossible to get a fleet of transports to the windward."

Within a month Nelson had returned from the seaboard of Crete and Syria and was back once more in a Sicilian port. The *Vanguard* lay at anchor in the bay of Syracuse with the July sunlight dancing on the water and lightening the long dulled surfaces of the stone quays and the old city walls. From the high belfries in the Spanish style the Ave Maria came across the too still harbour. Beyond the ship there stretched away the empty motionless Ionian Sea. The admiral sat in his great cabin beneath the picture of his wife which still accompanied him. The information that he now received was clear enough to make him set off to the eastward. "We sail," he wrote,<sup>1</sup> "with the first wind," and sentences formed themselves in that idiom which is at once carefree and public and is so unforgettable: "Surely watering at the fountain of Arethusa we must have victory." "It would have been my delight to try Buonaparte upon a wind, for he commands the fleet as well as the army. Glory is my object and that alone."

There is no battle under sail more simple and more mathematical than the victory of the Nile. It is the perfect example of the defeat of an anchored squadron. Two factors make it memorable among the naval actions of this period, the destruction and heavy losses suffered by the enemy and the relatively equal share which all the thirteen British line-of-battleships took in the engagement.

Beside the Nile, Cape St. Vincent and Lord Howe's victory and the battles of the war of American Independence all seem half-hearted. Hitherto there had nearly always been a number of unengaged ships, vessels which suffered no casualties and only exchanged some passing shots. It was the unity of this battle, the eleven ships sliding at once into their places, for the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure* had scouted ahead of the squadron and came up late, which gave to the victors so great a confidence. No wonder they felt that they had found a winning formula. The belief in Nelson's leadership as unique dates from this action. It took root among the officers and men and found its last and full expression when Nelson in the *Victory* rejoined his fleet before Trafalgar.

The battle of the Nile was an engagement in which every factor

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, iii, p. 47.

was in the victors' favour, timing and weather and the gift of an unequalled opportunity to show a swift collected seamanship. The manoeuvres are not in doubt, only the timing remains erratic. There is a divergence of almost two hours in the time assigned in the logs of different battleships for the destruction of the French flagship *L'Orient*. Yet this error only draws attention to the completeness of our knowledge. The logs of the *Minotaur* and *Leander* appear to have been lost, but the eye-witness accounts are excellent. Few battles can be examined so microscopically.

The fleet had come swiftly down from Syracuse. The *Culloden* had put in to Coron and had brought out with her a French brig and news from the Turkish governor. In the clear weather of the Morean coast the brig laden with pipes of sharp white wine from Arakhova and the Achaïan vineyards went forward in tow of the English ship which had rejoined her consorts. Night fell on the bare and bald hills which slipped down into the water. The wake soon marked the direction of the land mass; the scent of thyme and oleander faded. The squadron moved across the dark hot seas between Kythera and Cape Tainaron. The course was set for Alexandria.

This was July 28th. It was in the middle of the forenoon watch on August 1st that Nelson's advanced ships sighted the low Egyptian coast. "At about half-past one o'clock,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Captain Samuel Hood of the *Zealous*, "the man at the masthead said he saw a sail and instantly a fleet at anchor. I sent a glass up and they told me there were sixteen or eighteen large ships, they thought sixteen of the line."

A singularly clear impression is given by the captain of the *Theseus* in a letter to his wife. "We had,"<sup>2</sup> explained Captain Miller, "a fine breeze of north wind, smooth water, and fair weather, the body extending about three miles easterly and westerly without being in any order of sailing, and going about five miles an hour under topsails generally. The *Culloden* under all sail about seven miles astern, with the wine brig in tow," Within five hours the battle opened.

At fifteen minutes past six, according to the timing in her log the *Goliath*, Captain Foley,<sup>3</sup> "crossed the van of the enemy's line and commenced the action." The French under Vice-Admiral Brueys

<sup>1</sup> Letter printed in Navy Records Society, vol. xviii, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Account of the action, *ibid*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Log of the *Goliath*, *ibid*, p. 10.

were short of men and short of rations. They had really no choice but to fight at anchor. Still they did not anticipate the immediate attack and the night battle nor the decision to pass inside their line between the anchored vessels and the shoals of Aboukir. The head of the line, around which the *Goliath* passed, should have been moored in five fathoms of water, but since the *Guerrier* had disobeyed instructions there was in fact seven fathoms. Crushing the van and centre of the French squadron, the British ships came to anchor outside and inside their opponents. Four line-of-battleships following the *Goliath* passed inshore while the rest of the squadron and the flagship engaged the Frenchmen from the seaward side. A passage in Captain Miller's writings gives a singularly clear description of the actual method of attack.

"In running along the enemy's line in the wake of the *Zealous* and *Goliath*," so this account from the *Theseus* explains,<sup>1</sup> "I observed their shot sweep just over us, and knowing well that at such a moment Frenchmen would not have coolness enough to change their elevation, I closed them suddenly, and running under the arch of their shot, reserved my fire, every gun being loaded with two and some with three round shot, until I had the *Guerrier's* masts in a line and her jib-boom about six feet clear of our rigging; we then opened with such effect, that a second breath could not be drawn before her main and mizen mast were also gone. This was precisely at sunset, or 44 minutes past 6; then passing between her and the *Zealous*, and as close as possible round the offside of the *Goliath*, we anchored exactly in a line with her, and, as I said before, abreast the *Spartiate*."

The exactness of measurement is most effective. Then after describing the manœuvring in the narrow spaces between the French ships and the sands Captain Miller reverts to the fortunes of the other British ships which lay to seaward. "We had," he records,<sup>2</sup> "not been many minutes in action with the *Spartiate* when we observed one of our ships (and soon after knew her to be the *Vanguard*) place herself so directly opposite to us on the outside of her, that I desisted firing on her, that I might not do mischief to our friends, and directed every gun before the mainmast on the *Aquilon* and all abaft it on the *Conquérant*." In so doing Captain Miller left to Rear-Admiral Nelson his "proper bird" the *Spartiate*. "The

<sup>1</sup> Captain Miller's account, *ibid*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42.



*Minotaur* following the admiral placed himself on the outer side of the fourth ship the *Aquilon* and the *Defence* outside the *Peuple Souverain*."

Two elements made the swift victory possible on that day, the fact that there was still time for the British ships to pass inside in the failing light before darkness and the circumstance that the night battle itself was fought at anchor. The *Swiftsure* and *Alexander* did not come into action until much later, anchoring at 8.3 and 8.25 respectively and opening fire at once in support of the *Bellerophon* which was heavily engaged with the French flagship. It was a simple operation to sail into the action with the wind blowing down the line of battle. It is worth noting that neither ship was fired upon until she had come to anchor alongside of the enemy.

The defence was very vigorous, although the ships which passed inside the French received only slight damage. The *Majestic* in action with *L'Orient* and *Franklin* lost her main and mizzen masts and the *Bellerophon* had her mizzen mast shot away and "shortly after<sup>1</sup> the main mast which fell along the booms on the starboard side of the forecastle." This battleship's foremast was lost later. The fighting slackened after the destruction of *L'Orient* whose explosion lit up the two fleets revealing the colours at their mast-heads. It seems that the moon rose late.

Only the *Guillaume Tell* and *Généreux* and the two frigates *Justice* and *Diane* escaped the action, making sail at daybreak; but the two battleships did not return to France. The *Généreux* was captured by Nelson eighteen months later on a blowing raining day to the west of Sicily; the *Guillaume Tell* was taken by Sir Edward Berry. The battle of annihilation was thus completed. The French Navy of the Revolution was here broken. The ships' names recall the Girondins and the grave Roman spirit, the classical idea of the republic; *Le Franklin*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Timoléon*, *Spartiate*.

The Nile was a battle in which there was no boarding, a victory solely due to the effects of gunfire. The destruction of *L'Orient* and *Le Timoléon*, not to speak of the frigate *L'Artémise*, by conflagrations lit during the action, led to an emphasis on the danger of explosion in wooden ships. Before the war was over three British line-of-battleships, the *Queen Charlotte*, *Scipion* and *Ajax* perished by fire in the Mediterranean. This was a dominant conception in naval thought, a risk which the coming of the ironclad was at first held

<sup>1</sup> Log of the *Bellerophon*, *ibid*, p. 62.

to have extinguished. In the mid-nineteenth century naval ideas are constantly met with that date from the experience at Aboukir. It was also in this hour that the belief in Nelson as a Heaven-sent leader was born. It is indeed a turning point.

For Rear-Admiral Nelson, raised to the peerage after the action as Lord Nelson of the Nile and of Burnham Thorpe in the county of Norfolk, this victory represented the achievement of his task. Hitherto he was a-stretch with professional anxieties. "Here," he wrote to Lord St. Vincent, "I had deeply to regret my want of frigates, and I desire it may be understood, that if one-half the frigates your Lordship had ordered under my command had been with me, that I could not have wanted information of the French fleet." "Was I to die this moment," he exclaimed to Lord Spencer after the battle, "'Want of frigates' would be found stamped on my heart." But now he entered a different world when, the wound caused in his temple at the Nile already healing, the *Vanguard* came to anchor in the last week of September in the Bay of Naples.

The period that ensued between the battle of the Nile and Lord Nelson's appointment to command the Mediterranean fleet in May, 1803, has, except for the brief and glorious campaign of Copenhagen, but little meaning for Nelson's naval legend. The transcendent action was achieved; there was now little further fighting and upon the admiral there came the revealing experience of Emma Hamilton.

The impact of feigned and sincere enthusiasms in a world of which he was the hero combined to persuade the admiral to that charmed awakening to Lady Hamilton which was to last him all his life. Through her there focused his high Royalism which led him to that boyish veneration for the Queen of the Two Sicilies. He was fettered for some eighteen months to his defence of the Court of Naples. With his clear romanticism and a dislike for foreigners which was both naïve and cordial he saw that tawdry insufficient throne through the eyes of the Queen's friend the English ambassadress. It was Emma Hamilton's flaring patriotism and superb vitality that so far engaged him. Nelson detested a dilettante Voltairian aristocracy such as was to be found in Naples in opposition to their lawful sovereigns. What he admired was a practical spirit and English courage, and Emma Hamilton was very brave. His great spirit was vain upon the surface, and profoundly selfless; he was convinced he owed to Lady Hamilton a debt which he could never pay.

In terms of his naval career this devotion, at once passionate, nostalgic and domestic, had certain consequences. It created a rather fevered sensitiveness; it hardened him against Lord Keith who succeeded St. Vincent in the Mediterranean; it exacerbated him against Sir Hyde Parker in the Copenhagen expedition. His love brought out his innocence of the world and a high-tensioned perception of offence and gratitude.

In a sense Lord Nelson with all his swiftness for the moment's duty yet lived in retrospect. In later life these would be the days, the prelude and the fruition of the Nile, to which his mind returned and these the honours. He was always moved by the thought of the duchy of Brontë with its estates on the low terraces of Etna that the victory had brought him. This is seen in his fondness for the use of that exotic title. "And that they shall *not* do," he wrote in his diary of some proposed movement by the enemy on the day before his death, "if in the power of Nelson and Brontë to prevent them." The challenging assurance of that double signature was a tribute to Emma Hamilton and to the Queen of the Two Sicilies.

It was at this stage when the *Vanguard* lay at Naples that the background of the admiral's life acquired that character which it would retain. His links with Lady Nelson were gradually dissolved. Henceforward his home was bound up with Lady Hamilton and with his deep devotion to Horatia his natural and adopted child. The sphere in which he moved with ease was however away from them and beyond them; he was most himself at sea. He was driven by a patriotism both passionate and insular and bound up with a desire for glory. His light and free unworldliness played its part in enabling Lord Nelson to exact such effort and self-sacrifice.

These were the permanent factors to which the nation penetrated so swiftly and so easily. Compared to this it was of small account that his relation with Lady Hamilton both before and after Sir William's death created a coldness towards himself in the sophisticated world which had a different technique for its amours. It was of more consequence to his loyal mind that Lady Hamilton should rile the Court. Nevertheless there are no grounds for supposing that this association was other than popular with the people for he was secure of their affection. The Navy was his own.

## *Routine and Life*

THE PEACE OF AMIENS was little more than a truce, a breathing space. It was signed on 27th March, 1802, and within fourteen months the British Ambassador had again left Paris. The long blockade of the French ports was only interrupted for a single year. The careers of the great admirals, St. Vincent, Nelson, Collingwood, spanned the period and the problems of naval warfare remained unaltered. Nevertheless there was a sense in which the Peace of Amiens saw the end of the eighteenth century naval world. Something of the roughness and the unashamed inevitable privilege of the Georgian Navy passed away for ever.

These months of truce are perhaps a good halting place from which to survey certain elements in that naval life under sail which had now attained to its full perfection. It seems simplest to approach this question under a series of broad headings, the matter of impressment and the entrance to the service, the life afloat and its changing character, a survey of some types of naval vessel.

To take the first of these subjects, a very vivid impression of how men would be brought suddenly into the Navy is contained in a series of letters written to his father by William Cathcart, a young officer at that time in command of the sloop *Renard* lately taken from the French. The episode about to be described took place in the brief interval of peace and Cathcart is first seen at Plymouth Dock, as Devonport was then called, beautifying his ship, painting his cabin, building sham quarter galleries and remodelling the arms of the figurehead so that they could be unscrewed in a gale of wind.

"Our war complement in the *Renard*,"<sup>1</sup> he explains to his father, "being very large is 127: twenty-seven working hands are taken off at peace, which reduces the total complement to 100 men, out of which we have twenty-four officers and boys and fifteen marines, so that we are twenty-four seamen short. However, what men I have are prime seamen. I have not a man under 5 feet 6 inches, and none above thirty-five."

The description of the *Renard* is lithe and fresh. "The ship

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Lord Cathcart dated at Plymouth Dock, 24th November, 1802, *The Naval Miscellany*, vol. i, Navy Records Society, pp. 312-3.

herself is beautiful. She is long-floored, clean entrance and tail, breadth well forward, sits like a duck on the water. I am convinced she will sail like the wind." The next letters contain an account of her voyage across the Irish Sea and her passage up the Waterford River. They have all the arranged and artificial peacefulness of that place and time. We can see<sup>1</sup> Commander Cathcart on the poop issuing his orders through a trumpet, "and being only answered by a pipe," the children gazing from the river banks and "all the ladies from the gentlemen's houses" coming down to look at them. He describes the *Renard* coming up the river, the first lieutenant at the captain's side, three boats ahead towing, and sixteen sweeps pulling the ship along to beat of drum. Those first days at Waterford were very pleasant, the country gentry offering to lend horses to hunt with the subscription hounds, the shooting parties and the people cheering as the *Renard's* boat came in to land the captain.

The scene changed rapidly, for the Admiralty instructed him to press for seamen. "I received the warrants early Sunday morning,"<sup>2</sup> so runs Cathcart's account, "and kept the whole a profound secret. The vessels all lay in tiers off the quay of Waterford, which is like the pier at Weymouth, only half a mile in extent, with a gang-board from the inner vessel to the shore. At eleven I landed the marines under their sergeants with orders to post a sentinel at each gang-board. The seamen," he continues, "gave the alarm from one vessel to the other and tried to escape, but were, to their astonishment, saluted with a charged bayonet by the marine at the gang-board and driven back. In four hours with three boats I had 140 men pressed. I was employed the next three days examining affidavits, liberating first mates, apprentices, sick and maimed men; so that out of one hundred and forty I could only keep sixty-five men fit for the service. I now live," he concludes, "entirely on board, never being on shore except in the forenoon. I am then pelted and hissed. The expression is, 'A groan for the kidnapper.'"

He made a swift passage home with four sentinels posted, the officers wearing side-arms, the two after carronades loaded with case shot. These precautions were necessary because he had "so many dissatisfied people on board." Towards the end of March the *Renard* came to her berth in the Hamoaze.

Here we see the feeling against impressment growing always stronger. There was not the acquiescence of an earlier period, the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 316.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 320-1.

type of attitude reflected in one of those long rambling songs written<sup>1</sup> by a seaman in the *Conquistador* during the war of American Independence:

The beginning of the war they hobbled poor old Fegan,  
And sent him on board of the *Conquistador*;  
That floating old gin shop, who struck upon her beef bones,  
While laying as a guard ship near the buoy of the Nore.

When first they lugged him before Justice Fielding,  
Fegan thus to him did say:  
You may be damned, you blind old b——,  
I will be back again before Christmas Day.

By my sowl, Mr. Fegan, you are a fine fellow,  
It's you that have done the king much wrong;  
Call Kit Jourdan, the master at arms, sir,  
And put Mr. Fegan in double irons strong.

Through the life thus pictured there runs an element of cheerful inconsequence which the new ideas of freedom were to change. Such a song is characteristic of the period before the Mutinies. At the same time it is essential to bear in mind that practically all the literary evidence dealing with the outlook of the lower deck comes from the officers; the whole sea service is seen through their eyes.

It is perhaps for this reason that the clearest picture of the life of the body of the ship's company is that drawn in times of stress or battle. Men have the impact of the same experience. Commander Gardner, whose personal approach will be examined later, describes an episode of just this character. It is an account of the peril of the *Blonde* frigate when she was nearly cast away on the Shipwash in heavy weather when returning from convoy work off the Texel in the winter of 1799. The vessel was eventually saved by the change of the wind and the brief sketch is reproduced on account of the glimpse of the Dutch soldiers which is very vivid.

"The wind," the narrative explains,<sup>2</sup> "soon after backed round and blew dead off the shoal, so that we could not weather either end.

<sup>1</sup> Printed in *Recollections of James Anthony Gardner*, pp. 214-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 209-10.

At this time we were at single anchor about two or three cables' lengths from the breakers, blowing strong and the sea getting up. . . . Sent topgallant masts upon deck, and struck yards and topmasts; the wind increasing to a gale, with a hollow sea and a great strain upon the cables. There was no alternative to cut away the masts, which was immediately done."

With this background the next passage is illuminating. "I have already mentioned that we had Dutch troops on board with their families, and of as much use as Castlereagh would have been with the same number of his Lancers and Prancers. The few marines we had were worth a thousand of such live lumber. It was ludicrous to see those Dutchmen coming upon deck with their hat boxes, boots, trunks, flutes and music books, ready to go ashore, when the seas was running mountains high, and a tremendous surf of prodigious height on the sands close under our stern, and no chance whatever, if the ship parted, of a soul being saved." This throws a light on different aspects but chiefly on the hardships and that unsurprised endurance. This last quality is indeed the note of the old naval life.

No examination of the early stages of that career can be complete without a discussion of the most remarkable of naval autobiographies, the *Recollections of Commander Gardner*, from which this passage on the *Blonde* has been selected. His book is in fact the classic account of the life of a sea officer of the late eighteenth century. It is detailed and singularly candid and is marked by a matter-of-fact quality which is exceedingly convincing. The whole tone is very far removed from the sometimes disappointed romanticism of Marryat and Chamier. It is emphatically not a book of battle pieces. Tony Gardner went to sea in 1782 when he was twelve, saw no active service after reaching the age of thirty-four and took no part in any major action. It is the account of the atmosphere, the angle, the daily routine that has such value.

There is a Dickensian quality about the family background of James Anthony Gardner whose father is first met as master of the new frigate *Boreas* 28, an appointment which he had obtained through the interest of his godfather, Admiral Francis Geary, who was Kempenfelt's aged worn-out chief. The story of the Gardners and their friend the purser, Charley Buchan, walking to Cobham on a Sunday in the warm weather, the purser waving a shoulder of mutton in the High Street and singing "Farewell to Lochaber" at

the inn, has the flavour of an early *Pickwick*. It is all of a piece with Mr. Simmers the Sheerness merchant and his dog Pompey, and the Gardners' lodgings in North Corner Street in Plymouth in the house of a hop merchant who was also carpenter of a line-of-battleship and a great eccentric. There was the old landlady with her tales of the drowned boatswain who could be heard calling "Board the *Bonny Broom* ahoy!" in the night hours. The crew of the *Boreas* led by the coxswain of the pinnace, a noted boxer named Waddle, fought several hard battles with the men of the *Foudroyant* by the dockside. These were Tony Gardner's first memories.

There is a lightness of touch in the account of the Naval Academy at Gosport kept by old Mr. Orchard and of the boy's first contact with sea warfare, the landing at Gosport beach of the French prisoners taken by Kempenfelt from de Guichen's convoy. As a party of soldiers, with a lieutenant and some midshipmen standing by, assembled to escort them to Forton prison, a *posse* of women rushed out of Rime's Alley and sang the ditty:

Don't you see the ships a-coming?  
Don't you see them in full sail?  
Don't you see the ships a-coming  
With the prizes at their tail?

Oh! my little rolling sailor,  
Oh! my little rolling he:  
I do love a jolly sailor,  
Blithe and merry might he be.

Gardner was twelve when he joined the *Panther* and his description of her cockpit is very vivid with Tom Watson one of the senior midshipmen coming in and finding him alone and sitting down and singing out the many coarse verses of "A Duchess from Germany." "In this ship,"<sup>1</sup> writes Gardner, "our mess-place had canvas screens scrubbed white, wainscot tables, well polished, Windsor chairs, and a pantry fitted in the wing to stow our crockery and dinner traps with safety. The holystones and hand organs, in requisition twice a week, made our orlop deck as white as the boards of any crack drawing-room, the strictest attention being paid to cleanliness; and everything had the appearance of Spartan simplicity. We used to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.



sit down to a piece of salt beef, with sour kroust, and dine gloriously with our pint of black-strap (coarse red Spanish wine), ready at all calls, and as fit for battle as for muster."

With this will fit another memory of the same commission. "While lying in Hamoaze our midshipmen carried on a roaring trade when rowing guard in the middle watch. They would sometimes set off to Catwater to visit a house where a very handsome girl lived, who would get up at any hour to make flip for them. I have sometimes been of the party and well recollect the many escapes we have had in carrying sail to get back in time, as the passage from Catwater to Hamoaze is rather a rough one in blowing weather, and the boat would frequently be gunwale under."

After all this pleasantness it is not surprising to find that the cockpit of the *Salisbury* 50 "properly called the Hell Afloat" was a great contrast to the *Panther*. Gardner did not care for the North American station but one point from his time in the *Salisbury* is worth recalling. Mr. Stack, the gunner, who acted as "father of the mess" was accustomed to relate how the ghost of Commodore Walsingham had appeared to him on the coast of Barbary, while midshipmen would always maintain that the tier was haunted, saying<sup>1</sup> that "they would ask the parson (a wet soul) to lay the spirit." Throughout this narrative there is the strongest emphasis on apparitions.

In general the impression of the naval life comes out most clearly when Gardner deals with those of his own rank. For this reason his account of the next commission, after a brief service in a brig, has such great value. It seems the epitome of lax indiscipline between the wars. No doubt the fact that the *Edgar* swung at her moorings as a guardship in Portsmouth harbour accounts for the constant references to intemperance among the officers and to the misappropriation of naval stores. The boatswain suffered from both these weaknesses. "It is related," Commander Gardner declares,<sup>2</sup> "that the late Lord Duncan, when he commanded the *Edgar*, once said to him. 'Whatever you do, Mr. Bone, I hope and trust that you will not take the anchors from the bows.'"

This chapter in the *Recollections* is set against a background of the officers' seats in Gosport Chapel and "old Paul the clerk of beer-drinking memory," of casual adventures in Middle Street and returning late on board from subscription concerts:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

I hate this damned watching and trudging the deck;  
The most we can get, boys, at best is a check;  
Sit still then and let the lieutenants all rail,  
We'll ride out the breeze—says Commodore Gale.

There is an account of the mate George Wangford in his last illness sitting up and drinking capillaire and brandy and roaring out "that I am going to hell before the wind." A reference<sup>1</sup> to Mr. (later Vice-Admiral) Nowell, the second lieutenant, has its own interest. "He was a very powerful and active man; and though gloomy and fiery at times, was much the gentleman. He was famous at fencing and jumping, and could, as I have been told, jump across the gateway of Gosport works." Inevitably it was the junior officers, the many midshipmen and mates and the numerous lieutenants carried in line-of-battleships, who found harbour or sea employment between the wars.

It is difficult to formulate the impression that such detail leaves. Gardner had naval "interest" which he neglected; his life was passed for the most part among officers who possessed none. Such men never reached the quarterdecks of flagships and seldom fought in frigate actions. They were the unremembered middle-aged executive officers from whose labours other men would make their reputations. The very fact that they were employed in peace has its significance for the leaders of the long French wars had usually come to sea from a comparatively lengthy period on half-pay in that post captain's rank which Gardner's associates so seldom reached. A typical example of the old type of sea officer of the elder generation was Admiral Duncan. A sketch of his career will indicate the gulf that separated his life from that of Tony Gardner.

In many ways Adam Duncan was remote from what had now become the naval hierarchy. Nelson, who so much admired his victory over the Dutch at Camperdown in the year before the battle of the Nile, had never met him. He was very Scottish, born in the upper flat of a house at the end of the Seagait in Dundee, the lower part of which was the town house of the Stewarts of Grandtully. When a flag officer he had inherited an estate at Lundie in Forfar; his mother was a Haldane from Gleneagles. For many years he was on half-pay living with his wife, whom he styled "the best woman

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 87.

in the world," at Nellfield outside Edinburgh. His reputation had been won in the Seven Years' war; but between 1764 and 1795, when he was appointed commander-in-chief in the North Sea at the age of sixty-four, Duncan had only had two years' sea service. He was a strict Presbyterian inclined to Whig principles and, as has been mentioned, a friend of Keppel's.

A tall man more than six feet two inches in height and with a crown of snow-white hair, his movements were "stately and unaffected." He was very far aloof from the general pressing throng of importunate flag officers. The little finger of one hand was broken in the rioting outside the house of Dundas of Arniston in 1792 and he was obliged to wear a double ring. It is interesting to remember that the career of Mr. Bone linked this severe officer with the disorderly routine on board the *Edgar*. In a sense Duncan was not greatly valued. Captain Hotham remarks that "he was a man of no extensive general knowledge, nor had he much professional knowledge or experience. He kept very little state either in his establishment or his person and lived in a very frugal manner."

He had other traits. He was markedly sympathetic to officers in small ships, men like Lieutenant Brodie of the *Rose* cutter, Mr. Hamilton of the *Active* cutter and Mr. Hall of the *Speculator* lugger. Strongly realistic, he had a fellow feeling for his brother Scots. He was a firm opponent of the press gang and was most popular on the lower deck. A letter from a sailor preserved among the Duncan MSS has the stilted ring of spoken praise. "They can't make too much of him. He is a heart of oak; he is a seaman every inch of him." Duncan combined the strength of the old century with a genuine tart sympathy.

It is at about the time of Duncan's retirement in 1801 that the stream of naval life which links the world of Rooke and the elder Byng through the period of Vernon and Balchen with the days of Hawke and Howe and Nelson suffers a sea change. In its outlook and habit the Navy of 1815 had more in common with the Navy of 1860 than either had with the men of the seventeen-eighties.

It was perhaps the long blockade, with the officers and men cooped up together in the wintry seas, which introduced a humanising note which had no place in the world of Admiral Byng. Another factor which played its part was the successful quelling of the Mutinies; there was not only more vigilance on the quarterdeck but a new care. The expression of liberal sentiments ashore had an

effect. Finally, and very remote from this last matter, an almost feudal element had now emerged. In consequence of the great war establishment naval officers who had links with a countryside would often place the sons of neighbouring farmers or gamekeepers or bailiffs on board the different line-of-battleships. This, with Nelson's example, fostered the growth of that penetrating individual care for the members of the ship's company which was to prove so clear a characteristic of the naval captain.

Here is perhaps the place to insert a note on those amateur theatricals which were to become so marked a feature of the life of Nelson's fleets. Lieutenant Halloran's journal contains details of the plays on board one of the battleships which throw an interesting light on the position. After the performance of a drama called *The Triumph of Friendship or Damon and Pythias* in the admiral's cabin in the *Britannia*, a play was arranged for the benefit of the whole ship's company. Lord Northesk's fore cabin was itself turned into a stage "decorated<sup>1</sup> with colours, festoons, wings, etc. with front lights." The fore bulkhead of the cabin was removed and the main deck fitted up with seats. The drama chosen was *The Siege of Colchester*.

In the same ship there was a theatre for the ship's company on the main deck near the mainmast. *The Tragedy of Pizarro* was given there. How cheerfully they went to the great ranting scenes, barn-storming episodes and slabs of Shakespeare. The last piece to be given in the *Britannia* before Trafalgar was *Catherine and Petrucio*, clearly a variant of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

It does not seem fanciful to consider that these scenes mark a change of attitude. The mutiny in the *Bounty* and the murder of Captain Pigot of the *Hermione* by his own crew were fresh in the memory. These catastrophes had only taken place in 1789 and 1797; but already they seem separated by generations from the life of the fleets blockading Brest and Toulon.

It is at this point that we sense the contrast between the actual naval life and the cheerful forceful melodramas which the public ashore would always pay for and receive. It would be an interesting study to consider the reactions between such shore plays and the amateur theatricals afloat. A hearty raucous patriotism marked the former entertainments. There is a boisterous sentiment about such names as those of Jack Hawser and Joe Standfast who inevitably save

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Second-Lieutenant L. B. Halloran, R.M., Admiralty Library Pamphlets, p. 467.

the heroines from Mr. Debenture the avaricious merchant or from young Lord Heartless the seducer.

It is not only in the plays that names and actions are found thus stereotyped. In Dr. Moore's novel, *The Post-Captain*, published in 1815, we meet Captain Brilliant, Lieutenant Hurricane and Mr. Nipcheese, while the heroine is the only child of Admiral Roughnot. As Commander Robinson has pointed out, the language and the situations match the names for unreality. Thus the *Desdemona* takes by boarding a French frigate "lying at anchor all a-taunto in Hampton Roads." This was the background of knowledge of that world which was to crowd the Surrey Theatre to see Douglas Jerrold's *Black-Eyed Susan*. The day-to-day life in the British fleet was shrouded by the smoke from the broadsides of these nautical melodramas.

Very occasionally in the writings of this period there comes an unforced phrase which is convincing as in a sentence from Sir Robert Steele's *Marine Officer*: "to tell the truth our Cambrian (the ship's chaplain) was better in the bottle than in the wood." It was not until the coming of the peace that Mr. James and Captain Brenton would settle down to write their naval histories.

There was always a contrast between the dramatic presentation of life afloat and the reasoned discussion of naval organisation. It is surprising to recollect how much we know about the ships compared to our understanding of the life that men lived in them. In this connection the years before Trafalgar are a vantage point from which to consider the vessels in which these wars were fought.

Certain principles become apparent. In the first place the actual shipbuilding was exposed to no great changes; the situation was fairly static. There was the usual appreciation of the finer foreign naval vessels. The *Commerce de Marseilles* for instance was much admired; but ships of other Powers were seldom copied literally. There was interest in the captured Spanish line-of-battleships now added to the Navy. Men especially praised the *San Josef* 112 whose armament was carried relatively high above the waterline. It was said that she could carry her guns run out in weather which would prevent a British vessel from opening her ports. Curiously enough she was one of the few victims of experiment, her sailing qualities being ruined by the altering of her mainmast. The general practice in regard to fine captured ships was to admire and criticise and sleep upon it.

Thus the *Tonnant* 80 and her two sister ships were thought to be the "finest on two decks ever seen in the British Navy." A similar judgment was passed upon the frigate *Egyptienne* 38 taken at Alexandria in 1800, the "finest ship on one deck we ever had." These views of Captain Brenton's would not seem to be exceptional. When Captain Glascock published his *Naval Sketch Book* under the pseudonym of *An Officer of Rank* in 1826 he referred to his brother captain as possessing "the weight of authority naturally attached to a man of superior pretensions." The points here made may therefore be held to represent the service view.

In this connection the question arises as to why so little seems to have been done to improve the situation. Three elements appear to have played their part. A time lag inevitably intervened before the opinions of serving officers were brought effectively before naval constructors. The national self-confidence, backed up by vested interest, led to the repetition of rather unsatisfactory types of vessel.

At the outbreak of war in 1793 the thirty-eight gun frigates of nine hundred tons were considered the perfection of naval equipment. These are the ships which are remembered like the *Arethusa*, *Latona*, *Phaeton*, *Thetis* and *Melampus*. "The thirty-two gun frigates,"<sup>1</sup> explains Captain Brenton, "werè numerous and defective." A new type of eighteen gun brig of three hundred and eighty tons burthen with a slight draft of water, about fourteen feet abaft, had been evolved. There were also new types of twelve gun brigs drawing only eight or ten feet able to pursue the enemy over the shoals of the Flemish banks and along the French Atlantic coasts. It was the heaviest British warships which were on the whole the least well constructed.

Experiment with material was more common than careful changes in design. The nature of the wood employed affected sharply both the profit and the contract price. Two seventy-fours, the *Blake* and *Malabar*, were to be launched in 1808 built with Holstein oak and Indian teak respectively. There was little to be said for the fir frigates built from 1796 onwards with imported Baltic fir. The first *Shannon* and the *Pallas* were, perhaps, the best known of these vessels. There was a prejudice against American woods which seems quite justified. Sloops constructed in the West Indies had made use of Bermuda cedar for several years; but the pine frigates of the

<sup>1</sup> *Naval History of Great Britain*, by Captain E. P. Brenton, i, p. 43.

*Eurotas* and *Erydamus* classes were built from a red pine which was associated with the danger of dry rot.

A sentence from St. Vincent will sum up his view of the whole matter. "‘Body’ or ‘lines,’” he wrote<sup>1</sup> of the naval constructors” (were) the only words they possessed which had any relation to naval architecture. Your plan of building three-decked ships and seventy-fours to carry their guns six feet out of the water, and to stand up to their canvas is admirable; and I hope you will never build a seventy-four larger than the *Impetueux* or *Donegal*, nor a first-rate beyond the *Ville de Paris* and *San Josef*.” One may hazard the suggestion that this was rather an untechnical approach.

Nevertheless, the British ships were gradually improving both in sailing and in carrying sail. The copper sheathing was at this time at its best. The iron bolts and bolt heads in the sheathing had been replaced by copper. It was a merit in a transport that she should be “coppered.” Rather later the quality of the copper from the Cornish mines was to deteriorate, but this defect did not come into prominence until the war was over. In these years the chief complaint concerned the tendency of vessels built with American woods to strain their seams in heavy weather. The British warships tended to be cramped between decks. Their armament was often crowded; they were usually pierced for more guns than could be fought conveniently.

The general appearance of the fleet had undergone certain changes since the days of Lord Howe’s squadrons with their dull brown painted hulls. The brown port lids gave place to black in that scheme which was known after its inventor as the Nelson chequer. Each deck of guns was marked by long lemon yellow bands. Internally the sides of naval vessels were still painted blood red, and when the gun-port lids were open the sun would fall upon the scarlet squares. The masts were painted white before engagements. Nevertheless in these matters much liberty of choice remained and it is hard to generalise. Uniformity even in regard to external painting was not reached until the adoption of the black and white chequer before the conclusion of the peace. With these preliminaries we can approach the battle of Trafalgar.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Admiral Markham, dated 15th September, 1806, Brenton’s *Life*, ii, p. 310.

## Trafalgar

OVER THE WHOLE of this last period of the war there lies that character of perfection and completeness which foreshadows change. Like the life of the Regency world ashore the naval conflict was built up on factors, in this case the character of the war vessels, which were soon to suffer alteration. In the last resort the struggle turned upon the blockade of the French naval ports maintained by fleets of wooden sailing ships.

The progress of most of the old wars, except those which were markedly unsuccessful, tended to increase the appeal of service in the armed forces; a generation would grow up for whom the whole idea was normal and instilled in childhood. Napoleon, too, like all great military rulers provided a focus for the conflict; its purpose became his overthrow.

These elements contributed to mould the second portion of the long French wars. This stage commenced with the breakdown of the Peace of Amiens in 1803 followed within a year by the establishment of the French Empire. This in turn brought with it two satellite events, a Franco-Dutch alliance and a declaration of war by Spain against Great Britain. The characteristic feature of life in a line-of-battleship in the years that followed was the blockade. The stranglehold upon Napoleon's naval forces, whether in Toulon or in the Atlantic ports, was starved by one great victory, Trafalgar. When Nelson died, his successor Collingwood resumed the task which had been thus marked out for him.

With the material background now sketched in, it is simplest to examine the preliminaries to the battle through the eyes of one of the participants. Fortunately the letters from Sir Thomas Fremantle in the Wynne Diaries are invaluable for this purpose. It is true that they are limited to the viewpoint of one who lived within the closed society of the post captains, but with this reservation they carry forward in an unique fashion the detail of daily custom in a battleship which would go out to form a part of Nelson's fleet.

Very shortly after his ship the *Ganges* had been paid off, Captain Fremantle was appointed to the *Neptune* 98, one of the line-of-battleships maintaining the blockade of Brest. She was then lying



in Plymouth Sound and he took over the command early in May, 1805. Fremantle had been one of Nelson's frigate captains when commanding the *Inconstant* in the Mediterranean and was an efficient, sensitive, ambitious officer bound by ties, which were personal rather than political, to the Grenville interest. He had a tendency to suffer from bile and from *ennui*, nor did he altogether appreciate his first lieutenant. His feeling for the amenities could, however, be satisfied more easily in a three-decker than in a seventy-four. The letters that he wrote build up a picture of one aspect of his way of life.

His earliest applications were for the regular news sheets, *Morning Post*, *Morning Chronicle* and Cobbett's *Weekly Register*. Before the end of the month his plate was being brought on board, except for his mustard pot which he had left in London. The curtains in his cabin had gone up and his volumes of Shakespeare were on their shelf. The ship's boys waiting on him were to go into livery. The cloth for their jackets was being bought at Plymouth, but he wrote to his wife for buttons and nine yards of livery lace.

In a letter dated "as usual off Ushant" he asked for more linen and for his mahogany writing table. He was also careful as to his cuisine. A statement that he could get no milk for breakfast, since the only goat in the ship had fallen down the hatchway, suggests that morning beer was going out of fashion. It is clear that the captain paid unusual attention to the London *convenances*. He explained that he needed more wax candles; two were quite insufficient for his wide cabin. Boredom settled on him as the *Neptune* rolled and pitched off Ushant. He was reduced to reading a novel in five volumes called *Family Secrets* which was the property of the purser's steward. At other times he would pore over charts of the Pacific.

The *Neptune* was ordered to the Mediterranean and he thought of improvements for that station. In particular Captain Fremantle turned over the question of musicians. "A very famous band have offered themselves to me." He had, however, to do without them for "my band of music preferred staying on shore." They decided to hope for re-engagement by the Second Devonshire Militia; they would not face the high Atlantic seas. In this state Captain Fremantle sailed out to Trafalgar.

These letters of course only deal with one aspect of the background and leisure of the *Neptune's* commanding officer. They are all addressed to his wife "Tussy"; they stress one theme. Yet in this respect they do build up our knowledge. Most of the captains whose

correspondence with their wives has been preserved found writing difficult. This is markedly the case with Collingwood, who is tight-lipped and prosy with bursts of homely eloquence. It is extraordinary how serious and dull and barren are the screeds which Hardy, the captain of the fleet, sent home to Dorset. All this was very different from Fremantle with his mercurial worldliness, his stretches of French, his bad Italian, his cry of *Pazienza*.

"I am,"<sup>1</sup> we find him writing from the *Neptune* off Cadiz, "at the time living entirely in my upper cabin, the lower one painting, but what is the use of large apartments and neat without society." He found that late summer sultry,<sup>2</sup> "half a pint of wine makes me heavy and dozy." The spruce beer he brewed on board was a success. The glazed windows stood always fastened back to catch each hint of freshness and he slept at night with his doors open. On the bulkheads stood the panels of his designing which would be ripped away in the hour of battle. He lay in state in his cot in the oppressive weather. The great heat made itself felt throughout the ship. Far down in the hold the huge Norway rats fed among the meal sacks and the flour.

The arrival of the *Victory* wearing Lord Nelson's flag had greatly cheered Captain Fremantle. In the calm evenings the captains went on board their consorts to dine with one another. Fremantle spent two evenings in the flagship and received the offer of "my old place in the line of battle which is his (Lord Nelson's) second." On 19th October a dinner was given for all the captains in the *Neptune*. The next day he wrote<sup>3</sup> home that he had taken a fancy to his new servant, and was dining in his after cabin. The weather had changed and was now freshening; it was the night before Trafalgar.

That same evening the frigates under the command of Captain Blackwood in the *Euryalus* kept their watch before Cadiz. Within that harbour lay Villeneuve who earlier in the year had brought the Toulon fleet to the West Indies and back again, part of the moves destined to assist Napoleon's projects for an invasion. At this date, however, the *Grande Armée* had moved from its camps before Boulogne, and there was an accidental quality about Trafalgar. Villeneuve, who commanded the combined Franco-Spanish fleet, had

<sup>1</sup> Undated letter printed in *The Wynne Diaries*, ed. Anne Fremantle, vol. iii, p. 209. The earlier details are contained in letters written on 23rd May, 14th June, 22nd June, 6th July, 24th July and 1st August, 1805, *ibid.* pp. 170-1, 173-4, 176, 183 and 196.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from the *Neptune* off Cadiz, 6th October, 1805, *ibid.* p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated 20th October, 1805, *ibid.* p. 215.

been goaded into action by the news of his impending supersession. In the spite of orders from imperial headquarters there was one which envisaged the seeking of a sea engagement. The French admiral led out his thirty-three ships of the line to effect a junction with the Spanish vessels at Cartagena. He knew that he was going out to fight a battle.

During the 19th Captain Blackwood had reported that the enemy's ships in Cadiz had topgallant yards across and that eight ships had hoisted their topsails to the mastheads. Early the same morning the French and Spanish ships got under way. By noon it was calm and the hostile squadrons in the bay lay motionless. The frigates *Phoebe* and *Naiad* repeated signals, using Sir Home Popham's new telegraph apparatus, to the British fleet. Nelson with twenty-seven line-of-battleships stood out in the Atlantic far over the horizon with the *Agamemnon* between his flagship and the repeating frigates. From the masthead of *Euryalus* only one line-of-battleship, the *Defence*, was in sight to the westward. A light breeze sprang up in the afternoon. On the 20th the preparations for the action were completed. The *Neptune* was to follow Nelson in to the attack as the third ship of his line.

The morning of October 21st broke hazy with light winds and a great swell coming in from the westward. At eight a.m. the English ships with all sail set were standing towards the enemy. As the fleet formed in two columns to bear down on their opponents, Vice-Admiral Collingwood, leading the lee division in the *Royal Sovereign*, made the signal for the *Tonnant* and *Belleisle* to interchange places, the former vessel not being able to keep up with the flagship. A phrase in the journal<sup>1</sup> of Lieutenant John Barclay of the *Britannia* is illuminating. "Made all sail. At 8, light airs and hazy. Eastern horizon beautifully adorned with French and Spanish ensigns." With this there goes that gaiety of touch which is so much in character. "I expect," wrote Captain Blackwood to his wife when the action was about to open, "before this hour to-morrow to have carried General Decrès on board the *Victory* in my barge which I have just been painting." The commander-in-chief's last letter to Collingwood, his serious-minded and devoted friend, has just that quality of light serenity. "What a beautiful day," he wrote on the 19th, "will you be tempted out of your ship? If you will, hoist the assent and *Victory's* pendants."

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Lieutenant John Barclay, Navy Records Society, vol. xviii, p. 213.

There is no scene in naval history so well known in all its many details as the battle of Trafalgar envisaged from the quarterdeck of the fleet flagship; Nelson shot from the mizzen-top of the *Redoubtable* in the heat of action; the three hours that followed; his death in the cockpit of the *Victory*. In connection with the celebrated signal there is much appeal in the earlier wording which the commander-in-chief had first proposed. "Nelson confides that every man will do his duty."

In this study therefore it is simplest to make a few points about the greatest of naval actions under sail. The scene was ceremonial; the order proved less mathematical than had been intended; the approach to battle was extremely slow. In the British ships the bands were playing. Clouds were low and the weather warm at midday; it was the close of a hot summer in the Straits. With every hour the light airs were failing and the progress of the ships was growing less. The heavy swell, which presaged a storm, did not diminish. Making but little way the line-of-battleships rolled gently in the rise and fall of the long waves. The swell came in from the Atlantic, moving eastwards dark under a leaden sky.

There was thus ample time for preparation. Collingwood coming on deck in full dress with his epaulettes and medals and the gold-laced cocked hat beneath his arm said to his first lieutenant, "You had better put on silk stockings as I have done. If you are shot in the leg then it will be much more manageable for the surgeon." In the *Victory* Nelson had been on deck since daybreak for he always completed his business early. The first light revealed the decorations sewn on the left breast of his coat; the star of the Bath; the grand cross of St. Ferdinand; the order of the Crescent; the order of St. Joachim. This was the last battle which was entered with the pomp of seventeenth and eighteenth century circumstance. The manner was still that of the approach to the duel, although the intention was, in Nelson's words, "annihilation."

The admiral went down once or twice to his cabin. He left his letters for Emma Hamilton and Horatia open upon his desk throughout the action. Hardy and Blackwood, who had been called on board the flagship, witnessed the codicil to his will. His sharpness of vision, his *clairvoyance* almost, was concentrated upon the coming battle. A certain innocent assurance embraced the world beyond that fleet he knew so well. He instructed his steward to use care in taking down his portrait of Lady Hamilton when

his cabin was dismantled before battle. Very confidently he bequeathed his daughter and her mother to the nation. His mind as Lord Minto had observed was closely channelled upon the service.

His comment to Captain Blackwood, who asked for command of a vacant 74 to enable him to take part in the action, is characteristic of that sympathy with glory and promotion-rights (two intertwined conceptions) which lay beneath the Mediterranean legend. Nelson was refusing to displace the first lieutenants from their temporary command of line-of-battleships. "No, Blackwood, it is these men's birthright, and they shall have it."

The Allied fleet had wore and was moving northward. The sailing qualities of the British ships in light airs were fairly tested as Villeneuve closed very gradually upon his base. The hours stretched out, and the consideration of the shoals off Cape Trafalgar caused Nelson to make the signal to prepare to anchor before nightfall. At half-past nine they had been within six miles of the enemy; but it was not till ten minutes past twelve that Collingwood in the *Royal Sovereign* reached the Allied line. She was some two miles from the *Victory* bearing S. by E. The fleet flagship had still one mile and a half to cover. A shot from Villeneuve's flagship the *Bucentaure* fell near the *Victory* when the range was one mile and a quarter. Just astern came the *Téméraire* "running<sup>1</sup> down with lower topmast and topgallant studding sails set on the larboard side within a ship's length of the *Victory*." She was steering for the fourteenth ship of the enemy's line from the van.

It was on these ships and their supporters that the heaviest casualties were to fall. As so often in engagements under sail a few vessels bore the whole brunt of the attack. The other line-of-battleships stretched out behind them in the hazy weather. An observer stated that his own ship the *Bellerophon* and the *Belleisle*, *Orion* and *Leviathan* were the best sailers in the fleet.

The captains in these leading ships stood out contrasted figures. Except for Hardy and Fremantle, they were not Nelson's intimates. Rotheram, the flag captain of the *Royal Sovereign*, followed Collingwood's fortunes, and Hargood of the *Belleisle* was the Duke of Clarence's chief confidante. Then there was Eliab Harvey of the *Téméraire*. "I'll thank you, Captain Harvey,"<sup>2</sup> so ran the admiral's

<sup>1</sup> Log of the *Téméraire*, *ibid*, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in Mahan's *Life of Nelson*, ii, p. 379.

last words to this subordinate, "to keep in your proper station which is astern of the *Victory*."

Everything had come to Captain Harvey, a great inheritance and gambler's luck and swift promotion. In the *Victory*, through the friendly care of Captain Hardy, was the son of a small Dorset farmer, "Sam Clark (of Possum)." How much of the old England with its criss-cross of "interest" and friendship and privilege was represented in the leading ships of Nelson's fleets as he moved ever more slowly to his last battle.

The actual fighting conditions were as near as possible ideal and enabled the maximum destruction to be achieved. The general plan for the cutting off of the centre and rear ships of the enemy developed perfectly. The fact that the Allies held the weather-gage was of less than usual importance since they were not unwilling to be brought to battle. It is worth noting that the speed of the *Victory* was still further diminished in the later stages of her advance as a result of the French fire. "Every studding boom,"<sup>1</sup> writes Admiral Mahan in his account of the battle, "was shot away close to the yardarms, and this light canvas, invaluable in so faint a wind, fell helplessly into the water." When the range was reduced to a quarter of a mile the mizzen topmast was shot away and at the same time the wheel was shattered. Captain Hardy was wounded in the foot by a splinter from the fore brace bitts which had been struck. It was a full half-hour between the first broadside from the *Bucentaure* and the time that the *Victory* reached the Allied line.

It was at this early stage in the action that the greatest damage was inflicted on the enemy. The *Victory* had held her fire, except for some casual exchanges which are recorded in the ship's log, until she actually broke through between the almost stationary French battle-ships. Mahan places this event at one o'clock, while the log of the *Victory* gives the time as 12.20. The bows of the English flagship are described as crossing the wake of the *Bucentaure* within thirty feet of her stern. The projecting yardarms grazed that vessel's rigging. As she slid past each double-shotted gun was fired at the close range into the stern of the French flagship.

Only seldom could a ship be thus attacked at her weakest point. There had been more wind on the day of Lord Howe's victory and in that battle, as in the engagement in the Saints' Passage, it was a question of passing through and clear. But beyond the *Bucentaure*

<sup>1</sup> A. T. Mahan, *Life of Nelson*, ii, p. 385.

lay the French *Neptune* and the *Redoubtable* in that uneasy near-crescent formation in which Villeneuve's fleet was now assembled. As the *Victory* crept and felt forward each discharge from her port batteries swept the maindeck of the enemy. The stern work was all broken; the bulkheads were removed; there was nothing to impede the shots as they ranged forward. It is not surprising that in this single broadside twenty guns should have been dismounted in the *Bucentaure*. There were according to French dispatches four hundred casualties in that one ship. It is in fact remarkable that the *Bucentaure* did not strike her colours until past two o'clock.

Captain Hardy brought the *Victory* along the port side of the *Redoubtable*, both vessels falling off with their heads to eastward moving slowly before the wind to east-south-east. It was at this stage of the battle that Nelson pacing with his flag captain on the quarterdeck across the twenty feet of open space between the wheel and the cabin hatchway received his mortal wound. A quarter of an hour later the French ship struck after high casualties.

Two sentences of the dying admiral's are revealing. "Anchor, Hardy, Anchor!" was followed by the reply to a suggestion that Admiral Collingwood might take over command. "Not while I live, I hope, Hardy. No, do *you* anchor."

Some words which occur in a letter to Lady Hamilton sent at the beginning of October, after the admiral had rejoined the fleet, give perhaps the clearest impression of the quality of the Nelson legend. "I believe," he declared, "my arrival was most welcome, not only to the commander of the fleet, but also to every individual in it; and when I came to explain to them the 'Nelson touch,' it was like an electric shock. Some shed tears, all approved—'It was new—it was singular—it was simple!'" In the words of Lord St. Vincent, "There is but one Nelson."

The roll of the captured line-of-battleships was mounting through the three hours during which the admiral lay dying. It reached and topped the figure twenty for which he sought. News of the action came to him in fragments as he lay in the cockpit, his thirst relieved by lemon water. From three o'clock the engagement was diminishing in vigour and the crash of the battle slowly lessened. The clouds passed over and the sun came out; it shone upon the worn dismasted ships.

On the main staircase at Exton Hall in Rutland there hangs a picture of the fleets at the close of the battle of Trafalgar painted by Pocock for presentation to the first Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Barham. It is the last in a series of battle pieces. Among the Barham MSS in the possession of the Countess of Gainsborough are a number of contemporary annotated plans and sketches dealing with these naval pictures. They are ascribed to an unnamed officer present at these engagements. They help very vividly to fix the scene.

"This view," so runs the description of the second Trafalgar picture, "is taken from the north-east and takes in all that could then appear, the rest of the British having chased the enemy to leeward." Here is set out all that could then be visible from the *Victory's* quarterdeck. Two points strike the observer, the mastless condition of so many of the ships which made towing essential, and the apparent calmness of the sea; the swell is not perceptible. May there have been some temporary improvement in the weather which led Collingwood to be less insistent on the need to anchor?

In the centre of the foreground of the painting the *Victory* is represented steering north-east. Well away to starboard of the British flagship lies the *Téméraire*, dismasted, with the *Fougueux*, also dismasted, alongside to starboard and the *Redoubtable*, with sails set and foremast standing, lying along her port side, bow to stern. The victor watches over her two captives.

In Pocock's painting the *Royal Sovereign* is shown on the *Fougueux's* starboard bow and the *San't Ana* completely dismasted on the port quarter of Collingwood's flagship. The injured foremast of the latter ship is represented as still standing. Beyond these vessels and barely visible pass the *Leviathan* and an unnamed British frigate. On the *Victory's* beam, but across an expanse of sea, the *Achille* is seen burning fiercely. In the distance four French battleships under Rear-Admiral Dumanoir are making sail and steering south-south-east, while just astern of them the *Spartiate* and *Minotaur* are visible with a Spanish seventy-four they had cut off. Close to the *Victory* lies the mastless hull of the *Bucentaure* and beyond her the *Santissima Trinidad* likewise dismasted. Farther away the *Conqueror* and *Neptune* sail undamaged. It is an interesting list for on this evidence these were all the ships from both great fleets which were within sight from the British flagship.

It was a scene of exhaustion after the battle and before the gale. In the middle distance flames and smoke rose from the French



*Achille*. She had caught fire in her foretop and the foremast, carried away by a broadside, had come down a blazing wreck on the boats in the ship's waist. It is worth noting that the fire engine on board her had been destroyed by a hostile shot. It was 4.45 and the heat of the afternoon had not diminished. Within half an hour the *Achille* would blow up<sup>1</sup> through her magazine exploding. The coffin which Captain Hallowell had prepared for the victor of the Nile and had had made from the timbers of *L'Orient*, destroyed in the same fashion, was ready for its burden. It was at this time that Vice-Admiral Nelson died.

The scene of the finished battle broke up swiftly. The *Conqueror* took the *Bucentaure* in tow and the *Sirius*, which was perhaps the unnamed British frigate, got a cable on board the *Téméraire*. The *Spartiate* passing beyond the range of vision took charge of the *Tonnant*. Shortly before six o'clock Sir Cuthbert Collingwood shifted his flag to the *Euryalus*, and that frigate began to tow the *Royal Sovereign*. The weather was still moderate enough for boats to be sent away "with<sup>2</sup> orders to all the English ships we could discover near us that they were to take the captured ships in tow and follow the admiral." Cape Trafalgar was now in sight "bearing south-east by east about 8 miles." Three separate entries in the *Euryalus's* log that evening record "there being a great swell."

By daybreak a gale was blowing. "The whole fleet," wrote Collingwood in his dispatches home, "was now in a very perilous situation; many dismasted; all shattered; in thirteen fathoms of water, off the shoals of Trafalgar; and when I made the signal to prepare to anchor, few of the ships had an anchor to let go, their cables being shot." In the next days they struggled against the storm which had so long been heralded.

Sir Edward Codrington remarked years later that he had never been so glad to see the stars as after Trafalgar when for days they had seen neither sun, nor moon, nor stars until a small break in the N.W. sky showed the belt of Orion and heralded the partial shift of wind from south-west to north-west which just enabled the ship to creep out from a lee shore. As always the Portuguese coast to northward was in friendly hands. It is of interest to note that the *Orion* was ordered "Not to quit the *Bahama* (one of the captured Spanish ships) that she might be driven on Portugal instead of Spain."

<sup>1</sup> According to the log of the *Euryalus*. The timing of this event, as of so many others, is given differently in various logs.

<sup>2</sup> Log of the *Euryalus*, Navy Records Society, xviii, p. 153.

In intervals between the driving rain storms the look-outs on the Torre de Tavira could glimpse the progress of the disaster. Two of the Spanish line-of-battleships were recaptured. It was at this stage that Collingwood reported that the captured vessels would try to take advantage of the dark and boisterous night to get before the wind. The *Redoubtable* went down while still in tow of the English *Swiftsure*. The *Neptuno* ran ashore near Puerto de Santa Maria and *L'Aigle* piled up on the rocks by Terra Gorda. Some ships were burned to avoid recapture, and ten of the prizes went to pieces on the Spanish shore. The great *Santissima Trinidad* was scuttled, an early instance of this operation in regard to a line-of-battleship. Only four prizes, the French *Swiftsure* and three Spaniards, survived to reach Gibraltar. It was one of the greatest graves of ships.

One episode is worth recalling. Negotiations were at once opened for an exchange of prisoners and the Governor of Cadiz, the Marques de Solano, wrote to make "an offer of the use of hospitals for the wounded English sailors, pledging the honour of Spain for their being carefully attended." Throughout the wars in which Spain was involved on the French side it is pleasant to find this chivalry and freedom from all animus. The Spanish generalissimo, the Prince of the Peace, described the battle of Trafalgar as glorious but unfortunate.

Out with the fleet sorrow for the dead commander gave place to a nostalgia which would recur. Collingwood, his successor, had too much to contend against. Back at Gibraltar the captains took their ease. There were disputes as to who had in fact captured the *Bucentaure*, *L'Aigle* and *L'Intrépide*. The disputants rode together in the cork woods full of nightingales. The great admiral's phrasing lingered on in quarters that were unexpected. Thus Codrington is speaking of the *Donegal*; "a fresh ship," he exclaimed, "not in the action, a dear Nelsonian throughout, and in all things perfect."

The *Pickle* schooner brought the dispatches home to William Pitt. He was frayed and exhausted, a dying man. He had earned the hostility of St. Vincent, but Nelson he had counted on. The night he learned the news he could not sleep. He paced up and down his room considering the effect of the victory and Nelson's death.

## *The "Shannon" and the "Impérieuse"*

THE YEARS that followed Trafalgar have their own interest, but the enemy's naval effort was concerned to check and cripple British sea-borne trade. There was no question of a major action; the French line-of-battleships were in fact used as cruisers or were sent out on expeditions to relieve a port or garrison.

Once the *Grande Armée* had struck their tents on the downs above the Channel and marched away to Bohemia to win the victory of Austerlitz there was no further threat of invasion. For a time the Russian fleet was hostile when the Emperor Alexander joined Napoleon after Tilsit; but the Russian Navy, although it was to enter into British calculations throughout the nineteenth century, was primarily a bargaining counter, an element in the diplomatic moves and not a fighting instrument. England was to go forward through this period to her greatest naval supremacy.

The Napoleonic wars were the first conflict of annihilation. The French line-of-battleships in the different ports, which would be handed over to Louis XVIII at the Restoration, did not form a really valuable fleet; for that was shattered at Trafalgar. At the same time the Royal Navy was not obliged to consider potential rivals among the naval forces of her allies. The Prussians and the Austrians disposed at this date of no serious naval strength. Britain was alone in her great power.

This last period of the wars saw the employment of a navy which was varied in its composition and very powerful. It was a time of the perfecting of techniques and especially that of the frigate action which viewed from the English angle amounted to the interception and destruction of commerce raiders. It is no accident that both the series of episodes considered in this chapter are bound up with the practice of the *guerre de course*. Thus the first duty of the *Shannon* frigate was to chase French vessels of her own class operating against the Arctic whalers; her final service was the destruction of the *Chesapeake* as she sailed out from Boston to harry commerce. Similarly the action taken by Lord Cochrane in Aix Roads was occasioned by the known French intention to send a small squadron

of line-of-battleships accompanied by attendant frigates to relieve Martinique and to attack West Indian shipping.

In this connection it is interesting to note that the political influence of the West Indian merchants, already apparent during Rodney's sea command, was still increasing. Commercial interests were always gaining strength within the sphere of government. The curious character of the instructions issued by the Admiralty to Lord Cochrane reflect this pressure. The whole administrative world was becoming both more commercial and more bureaucratic. The oligarchic element and their naval *protégés* now faded out; there was less political concern with individual admirals.

As the era of fleet battles passed, the phase of the independent command, a couple of frigates cruising separately or in company, succeeded to its place. The history of the Navy in action is indeed principally the record of innumerable small ship or single ship encounters. Twelve years of war had brought the frigate action in particular to a pitch of high efficiency. Even late in the period of hostilities there were still battleship engagements like the capture of the *Rivoli* by Captain John Talbot's ship *Victorieux*. There were the Baltic operations, the frigate actions off Mauritius and Captain Hoste's victory at Lissa; but increasingly the naval war was concentrated on the single ship (not of the line) and her responsibilities.

The careers of two naval officers epitomise these later years of the war against Napoleon, including the war with the United States in 1812-13. It is worth studying the history of Captain Broke and Captain Cochrane. In spite of their surpassing, in Cochrane's case their flaring, merits they belonged to the most conventional of naval backgrounds. Like most officers to whom post-rank came very early, they were attached to the group of those with "interest," prestige and high resources. Both men were the same age, just under thirty at Trafalgar. They never had the chance (Broke after his wound never had the health) to command an efficient fleet in battle. Neither could exercise his matured talent. They were among the most memorable of naval captains.

Philip Broke was the eldest son of a Tory landowner of home-keeping tastes and most substantial means, Mr. Philip Bowes Broke of Broke Hall in the parish of Nacton on the lower reaches of the Orwell. He was heir to a rich inheritance, a fine estate and that great stone house, pointed and gothicised, crowded with furniture and with the usual Italian scenes and landscapes, Caracci, Maratti and

Salvator Rosa. In this setting Philip Broke was reared. Beyond the avenue with the double row of elms lay the water, a mile across when the tide was flowing. From the foreshore he could see the masts at Harwich. Down in Nacton church stood the monument to Admiral Vernon who had lived in his retirement on the adjoining property. At Broke Hall there was a portrait of Captain Pakington Broke of the *Foresight*, who had been slain in the battle of Solebay. Young Philip Broke entered the service just before the outbreak of the war. He rose swiftly and in 1806 was a lithe young captain with red hair which he wore without powder or pigtail. In that year he was given the command of the ship which is forever associated with his name.

The *Shannon* was a fine new thirty-eight gun frigate just about to begin her first commission. Broke was to command her for seven years and then to bring her crew to their swift victory. In the spring of 1806 three French frigates the *Revanche* 40, *Guerrière* 40 and *Sirène* 36 accompanied by the sloop *Néarque* 16 left L'Orient to attack the British whalers in the Arctic. The *Néarque* was taken by the *Niobe* 38 in the approaches to the Channel, but the other ships passed through the blockade. The *Shannon* formed part of the British forces sent north to protect the whale fisheries. She sailed at the beginning of the summer with the *Meleager* in company. It is a comment on the wastage of these years that both these new vessels replaced frigates of the same name lost in the course of duty.

It was a wearing service. The *Guerrière* was captured by the *Blanche* off the Faroe Islands, but the other two frigates eventually returned to France having captured twenty-nine whalers or merchantmen. For two years the *Shannon* was intermittently employed in northern waters without having the fortune to meet an enemy. This first part of her commission has, however, a different interest. The remark book which Broke kept with such care enables us to reconstruct the work, half surveying and half protection, of these long voyages.

The whaling fleet sailed every summer for the seas between Greenland and Spitzbergen bound for those waters which Lord Mulgrave had explored in the *Racehorse* on that expedition which Nelson accompanied as a midshipman. For Broke, too, the scientific interest was uppermost. On the second cruise they made Jan Mayen Island which the whalers nearly always lifted on their outbound passage. The remark book speaks of the damp fog so prevalent upon

that coast. Had the weather cleared the captain would have landed some of the ship's company. "I should have tried<sup>1</sup> to obtain some refreshments—as bear, deer and scurvy grass are said to be abundant in the low grounds." Broke noted that the sea and swell was like that in the western ocean, a phrase new and henceforward common, and that a large quantity of loose ice is "almost always hovering about Jan Mayen's island and the shores of old Greenland." His attention then shifts north-eastward to the waters between the Greenland and the Barents seas. "Another equally stationary raft," he explains,<sup>2</sup> "generally environs Bear Island and connects it with the south end of Spitzbergen; the passage to the fisheries lies between these banks. In most years the ice is passable at intervals during the summer as the drifts are opened or closed by the winds."

Speaking of the loose ice the captain noted<sup>3</sup> under the entry for May 1st that "the masses were frequently of the length of the ship, and as high out of water as our maindeck guns, or about ten or twelve feet, and appeared to swim two or three fathoms deep. They were all alike covered with frozen snow—we saw the seals basking upon many of them." There in those northern seas the *Shannon* exercised her great guns and began that regular firing practice which in the sequel was to make her famous. Meanwhile, however, the frigate ranged the high latitudes and found no enemy.

We have details of the anchorages along the coast of Spitzbergen like Magdalena Bay. In regard to this place Captain Broke noted<sup>4</sup> that the wind came off the land in furious squalls "as it does in a Levanter at Gibraltar or Rosas Bay." The chill of those waters is well conveyed. "We saw some huge islands wandering in the offing, but no ice at sea and only five or six of them." And again.<sup>5</sup> "On 13th July at night we opened the sea swell, and perceived we had got out of the narrow channel."

"The whalers consider," Broke explained in his remarks,<sup>6</sup> "the narrow basin or gulf between the west ice and the north-west of Spitzbergen as the head of the fishery. From 78° to 80° North and round Hackluyt's Head in open seasons they have smooth water in that region, and generally finer weather and fewer fogs than when farther to the southward." Here, too, whales were abundant.

<sup>1</sup> Remark book of H.M.S. *Shannon* printed in the Rev. J. G. Brighton's *Memoir of Sir Philip Broke*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 61.    <sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 69.    <sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

Then comes a taut, clear description of that grim Spitzbergen<sup>1</sup> coast with the great ice islands stranded in the bays. "The best mark to prevent a ship's overshooting it (the Magdalena anchorage) are the seven icebergs which lie between the Whaleback Point and the Fair Foreland." It was made plain that most of the few ships met with in these waters had never come to anchor and had merely made their landfall sighting the high mountains which surrounded Cape Lookout. A note referred to the small settlement formed by the Russian hunters at Hambro Creek. These men had been employed by the merchants at Archangel and would exchange their poor furs with the crews of English whalers against rum and brandy. It was, Broke thought, to some extent a penal colony. The Russians came in "small brig-rigged vessels of about 70 or 80 tons burthen, of a clumsy construction."<sup>2</sup> The ships which the *Shannon* spoke were nearly always Danes and Hamburgers and Bremeners.

These papers also contain some general notes about the navigation of these seas which throw a light upon the duties of a British frigate in the high latitudes. "We noticed," so runs one entry,<sup>3</sup> "that the whalers always headed off a lee ice, upon a breeze rising or a swell setting in, with as much care as they would have done from a lee shore, although in the best fishing grounds; and they considered it extremely dangerous to entangle themselves in the heavy streams."

"The blink or brightness of the sky over the ice will often," the narrative continues,<sup>4</sup> "show its position long before the ice itself can be seen from the mastheads. If caught with a fresh breeze, amongst heavy driving masses of the ice, it is dangerous to attempt to work or sail out again; the safest way is to lie and drive with the ice—backing and filling, to avoid such pieces as you come near—in preference to wearing or bearing up to clear them as the ship should never acquire headway enough to strike with violence."

This is an interesting point. It was with the coming of steam and with swift passages that the threat of icebergs became really menacing. Already there had been disasters caused by the bergs which had calved from the ice tongues of the glaciers on the west Greenland coast and had been brought down in the Labrador current to the track of naval or merchant ships on the Newfoundland voyages.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 72-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 73.

Nevertheless the speeds were slow and this helped to stave off destruction. In the case of the loss of the packet *Lady Hobart* which struck an "island of ice" off the Grand Banks in the end of June, 1803, the ship, although driving hard through fog before a westerly gale, was not making more than seven knots. It was the forcing speed of the large steam vessels which was to bring about their special danger as in the case of the loss of the Collins liners and in the final tragedy of the *Titanic*. The sailing ships took these seas very quietly. Captain Broke even defends his practice because, unlike the whalers, he did not grapple with the ice.

Throughout these passages there is that sense of the increase of nautical knowledge on a distant station. It is not difficult to see how the Navy came so easily to its great nineteenth century task of surveying and charting the far coasts of the world. But the chief interest in this war-time was gunnery. We can picture the *Shannon's* crew exercising with shot at a mark, a beef cask carrying a piece of canvas four feet square. Each gun was allowed three shots. The range was between three and four hundred yards and the canvas was always cut to pieces. Beside every port a compass was laid out on the deck by cutting grooves filled with white putty on the planking. There was a wooden quadrant for degrees of elevation and all the guns and carronades were fitted with dispart sights.

After the return of the *Sirène* and *Revanche* to their French ports and when it was clear that no other frigates had been sent forth, the *Shannon* and her consorts were brought southward. From 1808 until 1811 she was cruising off the Black Rocks and Ushant with an occasional reach south to Basque Roads. Still she met no enemy except that she came up at the close of the action in which Captain Sir Michael Seymour in the *Amethyst* captured the *Thétis*. Early in 1811 the *Shannon* docked at Plymouth for re-coppering and that summer was sent to Halifax. She had not changed her crew.

It is not surprising that Captain Broke had under his command the most efficient ship's company on the Newfoundland station. The seamen were well trained and the boys who had joined in 1806 had now grown to manhood. It was during this winter that the outbreak of war between Britain and the United States, which was a legacy of Napoleon's continental system and of the British use of the right to search, became a certainty. It was to the advantage of the *Shannon* that owing to the very small size and fine quality of the navy of the United States this conflict was bound to be a frigate war.



The operations resolved themselves into an eventually strangling British blockade and initially successful American privateering. The principal American successes in single ship actions were won by two fine forty-four gun frigates the *Constitution* and the *United States*. The latter took the *Macedonian* and the former the *Java* and the *Guerrière*. The last-named ship was that French frigate which the *Blanche* had captured. In this case the combat was particularly unequal for the *Guerrière* was a worn-out vessel built at Lorient in an emergency and constructed with half-seasoned wood. There was certainly a balance for the *Shannon* to redress.

Throughout the winter of 1812-13 the British frigates kept the bitter seas. The *Shannon's* crew wore what is described as a thick worsted under-dress with mittens and Welsh wigs throughout this service. They realised that action would come with the spring and summer. On 3rd April Broke came close to examine Boston harbour; the view was tantalising. There lay<sup>1</sup> the *Congress* ready for sea—the *President* with her topmasts rigged—the *Constitution* with only her mainmast in.

Two other extracts from the frigate's log will indicate the development of events. "On the evening of Friday, April 30th, the weather being thick and rainy, the American frigates stole out of harbour and got safely to sea." They had bye-passed the *Shannon* and her companion the *Tenedos*. "May 13th.<sup>2</sup> Again reconnoitred Boston harbour, and saw the *Chesapeake* there with topgallant yards across."

This is the first mention of this new frigate, a vessel some seventy tons larger than the *Shannon* and with a complement which exceeded hers by ninety. Her captain, Lawrence, was eager for action and from the moment that the *Chesapeake* was first distinguished one is conscious of the impending duel. On May 21 the *Shannon* lay motionless between Marshfield and Plymouth some five or six miles off the land. At dusk she came in close to Boston and at night hove-to under Marshfield light. She could distinguish little in the haze but "heard that *Chesapeake* had bent sails to-day." On the 25th Captain Broke took fifteen tons of water from the *Tenedos* and then detached her with instructions to rejoin off Boston on June 14. Meanwhile she was to cruise far out to intercept the American frigate if she slipped past the *Shannon* in thick weather. On the 28th a heavy swell set in; there were light variable winds and a damp fog.

<sup>1</sup> Log of the *Shannon* under 3rd April, 1813, printed, *ibid*, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Log printed *ibid*, p. 155.

Tuesday morning June 1st broke with a faint breeze and fair sunny weather. The *Shannon* had lain off Cape Anne the night before. At this point her captain addressed a letter of challenge to the commanding officer of the *Chesapeake*. It was entrusted to Captain Slocum, a discharged prisoner who was put ashore at Marblehead, but did not reach its destination.

The *Shannon* came down the coast under easy sail standing in close to the lighthouse with colours flying. During the morning the British ship exercised her great guns without firing as she reached to and fro across the bay. Shortly after the men had been sent to dinner the *Chesapeake* was seen coming out.

Several hours passed before the action commenced as both ships moved out eastward into more open waters. Broke addressed the ship's company and two subsequent exchanges have been recorded. Jacob West, who had been a seaman in the *Guerrière*, said to him, "I hope, sir, you will give us revenge for the *Guerrière* to-day?" The captain replied, "You shall have it, my man: go to your quarters." Another seaman asked, "Mayn't we have three ensigns, sir, like she has?" for the *Shannon* had a single ensign which was worn and faded. "No," said Broke, "we have always been an unassuming ship."

At about a quarter to six the *Chesapeake* came down rapidly at an angle of impunity and rounded-to upon the starboard quarter of her opponent. Her royal yards had been sent down on deck and her sail reduced to very much the same dimensions as the *Shannon* which was brought-to under topsails and jib. In the British ship the royal yards were kept across as her captain considered that these lofty sails might be serviceable in the event of the light air dying away.

Captain Broke walked forward and through his own skylight gave orders to the maindeck captain of guns to "fire on the enemy as soon as the guns bore on his second bow-port." The sails of the *Chesapeake* came between the slanting rays of the evening sun and the *Shannon*, darkening the latter's maindeck ports. The increasing ripple of the water against her bows could be heard distinctly by the men at the *Shannon's* silent after battery.

The British frigate began the action by firing in rapid succession her after or fourteenth maindeck gun, then the after carronade on the quarterdeck, and then the thirteenth maindeck gun and the whole broadside. The American captain, conspicuous in his white vest, was severely wounded by a ball when standing on a carronade slide. The *Chesapeake* was already gravely damaged, her tiller ropes and jib

sheet had been shot away, her wheel broken, and she gradually luffed into the wind exposed to the *Shannon's* second broadside.

The marines in the gangways and the seamen crowded about the booms poured in a withering fire. The *Chesapeake* had continued to drift astern until her larboard quarter struck the *Shannon* about the fifth or sixth gun on the maindeck. Captain Broke threw down his trumpet and cried, "Follow me who can!" About fifty men crossed into the American frigate in the short time that the ships were in contact. One of the midshipmen, Smith, boarded the enemy off the foreyard of the *Shannon*.

The *Chesapeake's* head gradually falling off, her sails filled again; she broke away from the lashings and forged across the bow of her opponent. The British boarding party soon gained control of the upper deck. A white ensign was bent on under the United States flag and the *Shannon* in error opened fire once more. One of her grape shot killed her first lieutenant. Meanwhile the Americans came up from below and Captain Broke was struck on the side of the head by a cutlass which was driven home with a clubbed musket. He sank unconscious on the *Chesapeake's* quarterdeck with a portion of his skull exposed. Beside him lay his sword with its regulation mounting of gold wire and ivory.

Within two minutes the maindeck of the *Chesapeake* was also cleared. Broke was brought back to his own ship and laid in the cot in his own cabin saying, "Pray take care of my good old sword." Captain Lawrence was taken down to his own wardroom. His ship's company had lost seventy men killed by the *Shannon's* broadsides. The two ships lay not more than a pistol shot apart in the quiet evening. The British vessel's masts were "considerably wounded,"<sup>1</sup> and rigging and hull of the ship much cut up." Lieutenant Provo Wallis noted<sup>2</sup> that the "cannonading continued for only eleven minutes." He also gives<sup>3</sup> an eyewitness's support to the well-known story. "The *Chesapeake* had (upon deck) some hundreds of handcuffs in readiness for us. So we ornamented them with their own manacles." Captain Lawrence died of his wounds near Sanbro' Lighthouse outside Halifax. A dense fog kept both ships outside that harbour. In the morning of Whitsunday, June 6th, the *Shannon* and the *Chesapeake* entered the port together.

<sup>1</sup> Report of the action printed *ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Account by Admiral Sir Provo Wallis, *ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Broke's active career was over: he was created a baronet and a knight of the Bath. His naval service had been spent afloat and he never contracted feuds or alliances. The captains of the *Tenedos* and *Spartan*, Hyde Parker and Edward Pelham Brenton, were his chief friends. The former was also a neighbour, a son of old Sir Hyde Parker under whom Lord Nelson had served at Copenhagen. Broke never embroiled himself with his seniors. He did his duty free from them. It was a very different matter with Thomas Cochrane.

Captain Lord Cochrane was perhaps the stormiest of all those officers who eventually reached flag rank. He was a man who took hazards of every kind and revealed a surprising and deep originality. He was also utterly courageous and gloried in his enmities. Naval associations in his family went far back, for his father's grand uncle John Cochrane had been lost as a lieutenant in 1707 in the great storm. Cochrane was himself the eldest child of the Earl of Dundonald who had begun life in the service and had wasted his heir's inheritance upon inventions. An uncle was an admiral, Sir Alexander Forester Inglis (known as "Sauney") Cochrane, who looked after his interests with prickling energy.

A certain family type can be discerned in the Cochranes of Dundonald. They were impoverished, touchy, rash and conscious of their "privilege." They had married into the naval stocks and lived that life, hired houses in London or the seaport towns. Inevitably they were quite remote from the great Scottish hierarchy. Admiral Lord Keith, the very type of prudent *grand seigneur*, makes this most clear. "If it is Captain Cochrane," he wrote<sup>1</sup> of Sir Alexander to Admiral Markham, "you will find what I wrote from Egypt, that he is a crackheaded unsafe man, and was one with others who endeavoured to stir up dissensions in the fleet; and I am sorry to find the nephew is falling into the same error—wrongheaded, violent, proud." In the Hotham Papers Lord Keith is described for us, "in his person tall and very active, with the appearance of what he really was, a man of rank in society and accustomed to Courts." He did not see fit to recall his judgment.

Cochrane's career had been the reverse of Broke's, severing with his uncle and then following Lord Keith, in the days before they quarrelled, from flagship to flagship, to the *Foudroyant*, *Barfleur* and *Queen Charlotte*. He had reached post rank after an astounding feat,

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 23rd February, 1805, *Selections from the Correspondence of Admiral John Markham*, Navy Records Society, p. 153.

the capture by boarding of the Spanish frigate *El Gamo* 32 by the skeleton ship's company of the *Speedy* brig. For sheer disparity of force it was a victory unparalleled in naval annals. That was in 1801 and now in 1806, the year that Broke received the *Shannon*, he was appointed to the *Impérieuse*.

In examining Cochrane's career it becomes plain that he was wholly free from any tendency to hero-worship. Nelson he never served with, nor any of those like to him. St. Vincent was almost a private enemy if one can speak of such relationship between a captain seeking for a frigate and the old first Lord. "Did you ever read," wrote<sup>1</sup> St. Vincent to Admiral Markham, "such a madly arrogant paragraph as that in Lord Cochrane's public letter, where he lugs in Lieutenant Parker for the avowed purpose of attacking me, his commander-in-chief?" There was Keith and there was Collingwood. The captain of the *Impérieuse* had a swift, assured and sometimes justified contempt for his superiors. It is remarkable that Nelson was himself obliged to serve under that officer whose temperament was most calculated to rile him, Sir Hyde Parker. It was a strange fate that brought together Cochrane and Lord Gambier.

Even though Trafalgar was over and the main French fleet defeated, it still seems surprising that the Channel fleet should have been entrusted to this kind and ineffective admiral. Opportunity had come very easily upon James Gambier; his uncle was a flag officer of some distinction and his aunt's husband, Admiral Lord Barham, had always looked out for him. He had also some kinship with Mr. Pitt. St. Vincent has recorded<sup>2</sup> his judgment on Admiral Gambier, "a compound of paper and packthread." He was a quiet, high-principled man, somewhat averse to sea appointments and married childlessly but advantageously to Louisa, daughter of Mr. Daniel Mathew, a great planter in Antigua. He was known throughout the Service as "Methodistical." Sir William Hotham very well describes the distaste which his preoccupations then engendered. "The conspicuous lead," he notes,<sup>3</sup> "which Lord Gambier takes in religious affairs has necessarily created him many opponents, and his Lordship's zeal in this instance, particularly as concerns his profession, is mistaken." The chill of Hotham's comment introduces the wild scene in the Basque Roads.

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated from the *Hibernia* within the Black Rocks, 14th April, 1806, *ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from the *Hibernia* near Ushant, 16th May, 1806, *ibid*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> *Private Papers of Sir William Hotham*, ii, p. 187.

The situation at that time was difficult. A French squadron of eight ships of the line had slipped out of Brest past Gambier's guard and was now lying in Aix Roads. It had been reinforced by the vessels already at Rochefort and was making ready to sail for the West Indies. A problem was presented to the Admiralty. The West Indian merchants were always influential and at the moment panic-stricken. "The nation,"<sup>1</sup> explains Cochrane, "was dissatisfied and even the existence of the Ministry was at stake." Two points emerged self-evident. It was vital to stop the French and Gambier was not the man to do it. At this point the first Lord of the Admiralty thought to send for Captain Cochrane.

The proposition which Lord Mulgrave advanced was somewhat unusual. He asked whether his visitor would be prepared under the general direction of Lord Gambier to take fireships into Aix Roads. The commander-in-chief had made it clear that he would not take the responsibility for this action, although ready to carry out any orders which he was honoured with from the Board. "The enemy's ships," Lord Gambier had written<sup>2</sup> in response to an enquiry, "lie much exposed to the operation of fireships. It is a horrible mode of warfare and the attempt is hazardous, if not desperate." Cochrane replied with unexpected caution that he was junior to the other captains in the fleet and that his arrival on this mission would be resented. This was obvious; but he allowed himself to be persuaded.

On 3rd April, 1809, eight days after his acceptance, he brought the *Impérieuse* into the Basque Roads. Twelve vessels were to be fitted out as fireships and Mr. Congreve was to proceed from England in the coppered transport *Cleveland* bringing with him a large assortment of rockets and a detachment of marine artillery. The admiral received the new arrival, as Cochrane himself makes clear, with urbanity. He was patient and forbearing and anxious about the distribution of tracts in the newly-joined frigate. A painful scene, however, soon developed.

The third in command, Rear-Admiral Eliab Harvey, the captain of the *Téméraire* at Trafalgar, a wealthy Essex landowner connected by marriage with Grenville the prime minister, accosted Cochrane in the flag captain's cabin. He had come on board the flagship with a list of officers ready to take charge of fireships under *his* command.

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography of a Seaman*, by Thomas Earl of Dundonald, i, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 11th March, 1809, from the *Caledonia* off the Pertuis d'Antioche, printed *ibid.*, i, p. 342.

The rear-admiral declared that had Lord Nelson been there he would not have anchored at all but would have dashed at the enemy at once. He was full of grievance because Lord Gambier had accepted Cochrane. "Well,"<sup>1</sup> observed Admiral Harvey in great heat, "this is not the first time I have been lightly treated and that my services have not been attended to in the way that they deserved; because I am no canting Methodist, no hypocrite, no psalm-singer." He also made it clear, as the evidence at his court martial confirms, that he was not one of those who cheated old women out of their estates. The curtain comes down on this domestic rancour.

Meanwhile, Lord Cochrane set to work. His novel idea and the real interest of this operation was the use not of fireships but of explosion vessels. We come here to a new term, for Cochrane was eventually to write<sup>2</sup> that "these explosion vessels are simply naval mines." The fireships from England arrived with the *Beagle* on April 10th and by that time all preparations were completed. Cochrane himself intended to lead the attack in the vessels of his own invention which were constructed on the following plan. A foundation of logs was placed along the bottom of the hull and above these were set spirit and water casks which would hold the contents of fifteen hundred barrels of powder. These casks were fixed upright and bound with hempen cables so as to resemble a gigantic mortar. Seven hundred shells were fitted in and three thousand hand grenades were placed on top. These elements were compressed by sand and wedges into a solid mass. The whole arrangement suggests a very lavish assembly of powder.

It was obvious that Lord Gambier, while permitting his subordinate to carry out his preparations, did not intend to intervene himself in any way. It was, therefore, unwise of Cochrane to write to the Admiralty to propose that some old vessels of the line filled with stones would ruin for ever the anchorage of Aix; but his unquiet mind was soon back again upon its own immediate projects. He had a knowledge of the coast for he had worked on the Rochefort blockade in the *Pallas*, the frigate which he had commanded before he turned over with his ship's company into the *Impérieuse*.

The French squadron lay behind a great triangular boom which is described in the *Autobiography of a Seaman*. Its wings were more than half a mile in length and it was composed of large spars bound by chains with heavy anchors moored at intervals along its double

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 361.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 369.

line. Fireships would be useless against such an obstacle. They would merely burn themselves out against it.

The French struck topmasts, sent down their topgallant yards on deck and unbent sails to leave as little inflammable material aloft as possible. Only their frigates remained in sailing trim. The ships were anchored so as to present the smallest possible target for fireships. There they lay with the names of the Republic and the early Empire, the *Jemappes*, *Regulus* and *Ville de Varsovie*. To the north lay the captured East Indiaman *Calcutta* armed *en flûte*. The French vessels were dressed with flags. As a ribald insult the *Calcutta* had an English ensign hung out beneath her quarter gallery.

The night of April 11th closed down dark and moonless. A high sea was running and it was blowing hard, but Cochrane was against postponement. Certainly his fireships' crews would have to row back against wild weather. He himself with Lieutenant Bissel and four men boarded the largest explosion vessel to lead the way. The *Impérieuse* was anchored at the edge of Boyart shoal and the frigates *Aigle* and *Unicorn* and *Pallas* were moored beside her. They were to receive the crews of the fireships on their return and to support the boats of the fleet if these were used.

Many of the fireships were abandoned prematurely and one drifted towards the *Impérieuse* whose officers cut adrift the second explosion vessel which was made fast to her stern. Cochrane went forward. As he approached the boom he lit the port fires and pulled away with his crew in the gig. The fuses, which were constructed so as to burn for fifteen minutes, were in fact consumed in under ten. An explosion, beyond that of the magazines of line-of-battleships, lit up the sky and Cochrane and his men were only saved because the falling wreckage came down beyond them. The water was strewn with spars shaken out of the great boom. The French ships cut their cables and at daybreak were all seen to be ashore except the *Cassard* and the *Foudroyant*, which was lying out of the sweep of the tide.

This was the most interesting part of the whole story. The subsequent quarrels, the dispute as to the parts played by the explosion vessel or the *Mediator* in breaking up the boom, and the ineffectual attempts made by Cochrane to induce Lord Gambier to bring his fleet into action are the commonplaces of divided authority. The *Caledonia* lay twelve miles away and the admiral would not be dictated to by his subordinate, nor did he trust Lord Cochrane's judgment.



Later in the 12th certain battleships were ordered to approach through the narrow channels. The *Impérieuse* drifting in stern foremost had already come to anchor in five fathoms and had engaged and taken the *Calcutta*. The *Aquilon* and *Ville de Varsovie* and *Tonnerre* were taken and burned. That night the *Calcutta*, which had much ammunition in her store, blew up. Cochrane notes that this conflagration could not be compared with that of the explosion vessel.

The French fleet now never left Rochefort. The *Impérieuse* was ordered home to England and Cochrane was created a K.B. Later he informed Lord Mulgrave that he intended to oppose the parliamentary vote of thanks for the action since he sat with Sir Francis Burdett for Westminster. "I told his Lordship," he records,<sup>1</sup> "that, speaking as a member of the House of Commons, I did not recognise Lord Gambier's services at all, for that none had been rendered."

It was pointed out to him that this course would ruin his own career, but he persisted. In the sequel he was three years without employment until his uncle, Sir Alexander Cochrane, took him as his flag captain in the *Tonnant*. The flagship was to sail for the West Indies, but before he could leave England he was falsely charged with connivance at a stock exchange fraud and expelled from Parliament and the Navy and imprisoned. Yet, though innocent, he had been fantastically imprudent. He was right in thinking that there were always men in wait to "frame him." Cochrane went out to win fame in South America and to create and lead the Chilean Navy, to be admiral of Brazil and then of Greece. He was to come home at last to reinstatement.

Lord Gambier received every consideration. He applied for a court martial in view of Captain Cochrane's action. This court assembled at Portsmouth in the *Gladiator* under the presidency of Rear-Admiral Sir Roger Curtis who had all along stood his friend. He was an old man now; it was fifteen years since he had paced beside Lord Howe on the quarterdeck of the *Queen Charlotte* on the Glorious first of June. Among the officers who composed the court, and brought in the verdict of an honourable acquittal, was Sir William Young, that quiet port admiral at Plymouth whom old St. Vincent trounced.

At Rochetts Lord St. Vincent still lived on. He had formed a fine piece of water at the bottom of the north field and had "a pretty<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 402.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Correspondence of the Earl of St Vincent*, by Edward Pelham Brenton, ii, p. 347.

little four-oared boat on it." He would walk the deck in his Essex dining-room and there he would air his high opinions. He disapproved, as Captain Brenton has explained to us,<sup>1</sup> of the vaccine institution "because he said the smallpox was intended by nature as a check to a redundant population. Lord St. Vincent disapproved also of educating the children of the poor, and was no friend to the sailors learning to read and write." One phrase is instinct with an old tired wisdom. "We expect," he declared,<sup>2</sup> "too much of men; perhaps we are inclined to over-rate the services we render them." For the few remaining years of war life went forward uneventfully in home waters in the old ways.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 346.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 356.

## *The Last Days of Sail.*

A VERY SWIFT change came over the character of the naval life with the ending of the wars. No one could then foresee an end to the long vista of peace which had set in. As a consequence development of all kinds was halted. Promotion began to seize up, while officers in every rank were growing older. A certain unity of spirit can be perceived across that period of forty years during which the sailing fleets rested on their laurels. The characteristic of this time is pride veering to eccentricity and a strong hard-fought loyalty. It is simplest to consider first that station where the old naval custom lingered longest. In the West Indies fever and trivial piracy both kept alive the memory of the eighteenth century.

John Harvey Boteler's account of the *Antelope* 50 fitting out in Portsmouth dockyard as the flagship of the Leeward Islands station brings back the detail of that scene. This was the autumn of 1815 when the *Northumberland* plunging southward through the Atlantic had just landed Napoleon at St. Helena. The *Antelope* was lying in the basin, only her lower masts were yet in place and convicts were employed in getting in the heavy stores, the cables, anchors, tanks and yards and spars. Now that the war was over the search for seamen had become more troublesome than ever. Lieutenant James, who had established his headquarters at Tower Hill, "hanging a large union flag from a public-house window," had only succeeded in collecting thirty men.

The places on the quarterdeck had, however, been disposed of very swiftly to the relatives of the newly-appointed admiral. Sir John Harvey took one nephew as his flag lieutenant, while his sister's sons Henry and John Harvey Boteler were respectively first and junior lieutenant. "What, sir," Sir Joseph Yorke and the senior Naval Lord had exclaimed<sup>1</sup> at this third request, "uncle and two nephews, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, it must not be." The phraseology of the wars continued and in the case of another ship commissioning for the same station men chalked up on the gunwharf wall, beside the printed notices, beyond the dockyard gates, "Happy, flying, saucy *Ringdove*, she's your chance, good officers."

<sup>1</sup> *Captain Boteler's Recollections*, Navy Records Society, p. 56.

The *Antelope* sailed for Carlisle Bay in the early winter. They had good supplies of porter and took aboard many casks of madeira. A little Alderney cow embarked at Portsmouth. The ship's company made their own straw hats.

Life on the West Indies station was still dominated by the yellow fever. This broke out in the squadron soon after the flagship and three "donkey" frigates had reached Barbados. The *Epervier* brig had to be sunk in Port Royal for fever which was eradicated when she was raised. Three pursers in succession had died in the same cabin; her casualties had been very heavy. It was noted that she had been lately completed with wood, which, being green, fermented. There was the long strain of the funerals in the Palisades, the burial place of the squadron on the isthmus which links Port Royal with the mainland of Jamaica. It had been the graveyard of the service in the West Indies for now more than a century and a half.

Venables and Penn,  
Two bloody-minded men,  
In an evil hour  
Those seas did explore,  
And blundering about  
This cursed hole found out.

Boteler gives a vivid description of those swift morning burials before the heat set in, with the sands shifting in the gales and the land crabs burrowing, and the detachments from the ship marching behind their band which played the "Dead March in Saul" and, strangely, "Adeste Fideles." The fever was the major evil of a life which still had its other mortal risk, the duel.

Captain Stackpoole of the *Statira* was a noted duellist and was eventually killed under the walls of the Twelve Apostles Fort in an encounter which he had forced on Mr. Cecil, the first lieutenant of another frigate. "He (Cecil) was first on the list of promotion; but of course could not take the place of one he had himself killed." An incident on board the *Statira*, lying at Spithead in 1813, suggests the last flicker of older customs. There had been some discontent among the officers caused by the captain's habit of opening their papers before they were brought off by the postman. "One day the captain<sup>1</sup> (who lived in lodgings at Portsmouth) came off; all officers, of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 110.

course, to receive him, the marine guard presenting arms. As soon as they were dismissed, he turned round saying, 'I understand, gentlemen, that you find fault and are annoyed at my looking at your papers,' and bowing round, 'Mind, I am Mr. Stackpoole, at your service at any time.'

The manners of the eighteenth century were already shading into those of the mid-nineteenth. Officers at Barbados still dined with the governor, then Lord Combermere, in full dress, white-lapelled coat and epaulettes, white kerseymere breeches and silk stockings. They rode accompanied by black running footmen; they used at Government House the service of gold plate. On board they ate stewed land crabs washed down by porter, and the ships were still without built-in cabins. Only canvas panelling separated the first lieutenant's cabin from a frigate's wardroom. Still there were more modern touches. We read of the smoke coming from the galley funnel. Visitors went out along asphalted roads to see the pitch lake in Trinidad. All the ships of the squadron sent their boats to compete in the racing at Barbados. One of the principal officers' resorts was Betsy Austen's tavern at Carlisle Bay with its engravings of Admiral Harvey and of his ship the *Brunswick* at the battle of the Glorious first of June. It is clear that these engravings were changed with each new admiral.

The squadron was constantly at sea running down among the islands. Boteler records coming into Chaguaramas Bay and seeing in that transparent water the hull of a Spanish frigate lying on the sea floor in seven fathoms. There was not much visiting of foreign harbours, some contact with the French of the Bourbon Restoration, a very little with the Spaniards. It is interesting to note that the English sailors mocked at the young men with braided frock coats and great swords going out in schooners to help Bolivar to build up the resistance of the new South American Republics to the King of Spain.

In the background there was the petty piracy of the last years of the Spanish Main. Government had been weakened by the wars which had begun with the revolt in New Granada. By this time only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained in Spanish hands. Mexico was independent as was the chain of republics which stretched south-eastwards towards Colombia. An administration battered, decentralised and inefficient created a situation more favourable for piracy than any other that the nineteenth century would afford in western

waters. It was in the Isle of Pines off the South Cuban coast that the pirates who preyed upon the shipping in the Yucatan Channel made their headquarters.

In 1823 one of the pirate schooners, the *Zaragozana*, captured a boat's crew from the *Gloucester*. The *Thracian* 26 and the *Tyne*, a schooner acting as the admiral's tender, were sent to cut her out. She was found moored in her hiding place "a wicked,<sup>1</sup> long, low, snake-looking pirate schooner" loaded deep with plunder, silks, brocades, silver and gold, brandy, liqueurs, noyau. They took her by boarding and twenty-three prisoners were captured including the captain, Aragonéz, who stood by the long gun to the last. Twenty of the pirates were hanged at Gallows Point on the Palisades. It is an episode familiar to Victorian childhood through the detailed description given in *Tom Cringle's Log*.

The account of Boteler's return to England has the flavour of the days of George IV, the contrast between the very large granite docks being formed at Sheerness and the remains of the old Navy. "A vast number of old men of war, that had been partially buried<sup>2</sup> for many years, the *Sussex*, *Lennox*, etc., were removed, and among them was the *Vindictive* frigate, one of the latest buried, and forming for many years the port-admiral's residence and office. These ships, worn out men of war, were originally sunk and filled to make the ground for the dockyard, in which there were only two or three small docks. They were inhabited by the scum of the town, the refuge of the worst characters of the place. Many deeds of darkness and crime were there committed without the possibility of detection."

At Gravesend, having landed some days previously, Boteler met the Rochester coaches coming up full of men paid off from the *Antelope*, "some on the roofs with a fiddler dancing,<sup>3</sup> one hung in his hammock underneath, a black fellow inside—the men would not allow him to be on the quarterdeck." This was the Navy of the long French wars coming into port.

By about 1835 the Navy reached the mid-period of the deep peace. It was half-way through that run of forty years which separated the last of the French wars from the Crimean and Baltic expeditions. Eight years earlier the combined fleets of England, France and Russia had destroyed the Turkish squadrons in Navarino Bay. This was the perfection of the days of sail. There was none of that angry insistence upon sail power which would come in the 'fifties with the ingrained

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 82.

distrust of mechanical propulsion. Steam was now merely a matter of tugs and harbour work and towing. The old line-of-battleships remained supreme.

Naval ranks had undergone an alteration. Since 1826 the executive officer of ships of the line had been a commander, a rank hitherto reserved for those in command of smaller vessels. The promotion of commanders to post-rank which followed upon Navarino had served to reconcile naval opinion to this innovation. The navigator was still termed the master. This was the time of slack water before reforms.

On 13th August, 1835, Astley Cooper Key, who was to be first Naval Lord at the time of the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882, joined the *Russell*, Captain Sir William Dillon, which was about to sail for the Tagus to form a part of Vice-Admiral Sir William Hall Gage's Lisbon command. The admiral had served at Cape St. Vincent and the captain had been a midshipman in the *Defence* at the battle of the Glorious first of June. Sir William Parker, who had also been a midshipman under Lord Howe, was one of the members of the Board of Admiralty. It was the height of the old Navy.

The *Russell* had been completed shortly before the peace; but she was in all respects a typical line-of-battleship of the eighteenth century. She had a complement of five hundred and twenty including thirty-nine officers. She carried one hundred and twenty-four marines and forty-five boys, the second-class boys being assigned to act as servants to commissioned and warrant officers. Admiral Colomb, who gives a close description of the *Russell*,<sup>1</sup> points out that her masts, yards, sails and rigging were identical with those of Lord Howe's flagship the *Queen Charlotte*. Her bower cables, however, were chain while her two sheet cables were of the old-fashioned hempen type. For another twenty years it would be held that hemp was preferable in securing the safety of a ship in riding out a gale of wind. "The capstan of the *Russell*," it is noted, "was in fact about the same pattern as that which Raleigh left behind him." Fifty-one tons of water were still stowed in wooden chests while two hundred and four tons were carried in the new iron tanks. "Watering in bulk" by means of pumps was not yet introduced. The ships spent very many hours in watering.

The armament was hardly varied from that established in the

<sup>1</sup> These details of the *Russell* are given by Vice-Admiral P. H. Colomb in *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Astley Cooper Key*, pp. 11-4.

long French wars. The problem of firing in a sea way was not yet completely solved. The midship port of the *Russell's* lower deck was just six foot and half an inch above the water. She fired only round shot as Duncan's ships had done at Camperdown. The powder was placed in four hundred and sixty barrels in the magazine as it had been for centuries. It was still mostly loose. Inevitably the ship was slow with the great weight of armament. Her speed is given as between eight and nine knots "close hauled and smooth water with royals in." With wind abeam and everything set she could make at most ten and a half.

Discipline was then severe. The gratings were regularly rigged for floggings, although the individual sentences were less than they had been. Promotion was slowed down and almost stopped. The captain was already fifty-six and flag rank was not in sight for him. It was well for A. C. Key that, even at fourteen, the child had begun to build up what Admiral Colomb calls<sup>1</sup> "Service interest which determines almost surely the rate of advancement." As the *Russell* left harbour the officers would stand on the snowy decks wearing chimney pot hats with a cockade in them and a gold twist down the side. The Navy of Louis Philippe was not, perhaps, a great force to be reckoned with. The atmosphere of the Bourgeois Monarchy, its peace and its retrenchment, lay over the French dockyards. There was as yet no other rival fleet. The posture of affairs had never been so gloriously unprogressive.

On her way out to Lisbon the *Russell* paid a visit to Ferrol. This was during the years of Spanish civil war which followed on the death of Ferdinand VII. The "Cristinos" held the ports and the Carlists Navarre and the Basque hinterland. The Spanish fleet was atrophied. "At Ferrol,"<sup>2</sup> wrote Cooper Key with his boyish wide-eyed vocabulary, "the basin is an enormously large one, but it is all going to ruin, and so are the docks, none of them having gates. There is a rope-walk larger than ours at Portsmouth, but the roof is falling in, and no one (is) at work there. Then there is a beautiful large sail-loft built of stone, and the boatslips are all falling to ruins: everything being built of granite; and in the walls round the basin, and all the jetties, are enormously large copper ring-bolts, beautiful they are."

The naval outlook was never more peaceful; the needs of war

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Letter printed in *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Astley Cooper Key*, p. 26.



seldom appeared more distant; the sunlight dancing on the water. Key liked drawing and was "doing sepia." He collected the paper-covered parts of James's *Naval History* as each came out. "I am," he wrote from Lisbon,<sup>1</sup> "taking sketches of all the different sorts of boats here, as there are a great quantity and some of them very pretty. I think our ship is à beauty . . . the pride of the Tagus."

The *Russell* passed through to the Mediterranean, forming part of the command of Sir Josias Rowley, a veteran admiral. One letter reveals the permanent preoccupations of the young officer as his ship passed among the islands of the Archipelago and lay off the Piraeus for the celebrations for the new Greek dynasty. "We sail beautifully," exclaimed young Cooper Key,<sup>2</sup> "to what we expected; we beat the *Rodney*, *Asia* and *Caledonia*, three of the finest ships in the Navy. I am anxiously looking out for Sir R. Stopford coming out to relieve this admiral."

When the commission ended the preparations for the voyage home were hardly less elaborate than they would have been in the days of Blake's first expedition. The *Russell* took in stores of live oxen. At Gibraltar she met with heavy storms. "Let go sheet anchor under foot," so runs the log,<sup>3</sup> "lowered the topmasts close down. Veered to half a cable on the sheet and brought her up." "Here," writes Admiral Colomb, "we have in perfection the old seamanship, which was less an art than a fashion, less a question of reason than of authority." On her way northwards past the Burlings the *Russell* sailed in company with the *Donegal*, formerly the *Hoche*, a line-of-battleship captured from the Republic in the old wars. It was a static world.

Certain changes were close upon them. There were old-fashioned sea terms which would go for ever. As units of measurement the league was to give way to the mile and the cable's length to the yard and fathom. Larboard and starboard would be replaced by port and starboard. The half-hour glass for checking time would disappear along with the great black log board and its chalk notices.

Improvements in design which now appeared in naval vessels were for the most part conditioned by the need to mount the heavy cannon and to give more adequate protection against a raking fire. The first changes came about from the lessons of the wars and were

<sup>1</sup> Letter printed, *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Letter printed, *ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Log entry made seven a.m., 25th February, 1838, *ibid.*, p. 39.

the work of two remarkable and very different men, Sir Robert Seppings and Sir William Symonds, who successively held the office of Surveyor of the Navy. Between them they brought the fleet from the Napoleonic wars almost to the eve of the Crimea. They were both from East Anglia, the first a working shipwright and the second a naval captain. Seppings was born in 1767 and Symonds in 1782, so that they were long accustomed to the old ways.

The fighting of the great battles and especially the casualties suffered in the *Victory* at Trafalgar had revealed certain constructional defects which the leisurely cannonading of the earlier wars had left unsuspected. The lower deck had always extended as far as the natural curve of the ship's sides; but the decks above were cut off at some distance abaft the stem. The circular bow for strengthening the ship against a raking fire was introduced in line-of-battleships in the last years of the war as a result of Seppings' experiments at Chatham dockyard. Frigates had been built in a similar manner as far back as the early years of George III. Two other changes affected the ships' protection.

At her re-fit between 1813 and 1815 the *Victory* had been given a continuous deck linking the forecastle and quarterdeck by planking over the waist. Originally she had been built with an open waist with merely a light gangway on each side of the ship close to the bulwarks and above the upper deck guns. Attention was then devoted to the design of the stern of first-rates. These were even more exposed to the effects of a raking fire than were the forward sections of the vessels. Above the lower deck there was nothing to impede the round shot save the glass in the stern windows and such light cabin bulkheads as had not been unshipped. The introduction of round or elliptical sterns dates from 1817. Both fore and aft the great ships now had protection which had been denied to their predecessors. The stern of the *Asia*, for example, also mounted a powerful battery. These were advantages which war would never test.

One other development in construction had provided the basis for Seppings' reputation. The finest ship of the French Navy of the Ancien Regime, the *Commerce de Marseilles*, had a length of two hundred and eleven feet. These dimensions were never exceeded in sailing men-of-war because of the difficulty of "hogging," that is to say the sagging of the bow and stern in long wooden vessels. It was the surveyor's invention of the system of diagonally bracing and

trussing the frame timbers which prevented this defect. Seppings' blocks designed to assist the examination of the keels and lower timbers of a naval vessel were also introduced by him. A ship could be docked and undocked by these means in the course of one spring tide.

Although the rigging of "liners" had altered little, there were various changes in other ships. The mizzen in an English frigate now had a boom at its foot like a brigantine. A flying jib had been introduced outside the jib set either on a larger jib boom or on a new spar, the flying jib boom. In general the sail plan had been much modified. The upper sails, and especially the main topgallant sail, were considerably larger than hitherto. In 1841 Captain Forbes produced his plan for the division of the great topsails. Royals were universal and sky sails above the royals. Since the Napoleonic wars sails were now "bent" to iron jackstays running along the upper side of the yards.

The ships in these last years were very buoyant, extremely comfortable and roomy between decks. A typical Seppings frigate of the sixty-gun *Java* class, like the *Winchester* which became the second *Conway*, had a large and spacious mess deck below the gun deck. They were well suited to those tropic seas in which so many units of the peace-time fleet were stationed.

Sir Robert Seppings went out with the coming of the Reform Bill. He retired in 1832 when Sir James Graham began his reforms of the naval administration. In his place there came a naval officer, a man with "interest" and energy, a captain with a passion for ship designing, Sir William Symonds. During his fifteen years as surveyor he was responsible for the construction of one hundred and eighty vessels. He brought the Navy under sail to its last pitch. His frigates were particularly successful. They had more beam than was usual and were very speedy. The *Pique*, perhaps his best-known ship, was spoken of in the service for many years. Symonds developed an improved form of bottom, which was much less full and heavy, and he experimented with the elliptical form of stern which Seppings had in the first place introduced. His ships rolled rather heavily in a seaway and they were to some extent subjects of controversy. The naval memoirs of the time are full of references to "Symondites."

This was the period of the Blackwall "frigates" which, together with the transports and convict ships, shared the voyages to the East and to Australia after the East India Company's charter had expired

in 1833. Such ships were closely parallel to naval vessels. The *Marlborough*, which was launched in 1846, was in fact built with her scantlings pierced for fifty guns so that she could be taken up in case of war as a hired frigate. She had not the beam of Sir William Symonds' ships the *Vernon* and *Arethusa* and she differed again from the *Phaeton* which was designed at this date by White of Cowes. At the same time she came well within their category. This would not be true either of the new iron steamer or of the new clipper ship. Here it is necessary to make a brief comment on conditions prevailing in the merchant service in order to make this point more clear.

The gold rush to California which began in 1848 and the lesser gold rush to New South Wales beginning in 1852 did much to modify the design of sailing ships. This was also to be affected at a slightly later date by the development of the tea trade with China. Such new demands stimulated, though they did not create the clipper ship, a term used to describe those vessels built for speed which had a clipper type of hull, that is to say with ends fined down so that there was an actual hollow towards the bow and stern. It is worth noting that the introduction of steam power played its own subsidiary part in this development. The use of tugs for manœuvring in harbour entrances facilitated the increased length of ships which could at last ignore the need for handiness in narrow waters.

The dates of the creation of this new type have their significance. The *Rainbow*, built in 1845, was the first of these vessels, while the *Flying Cloud*, launched at Boston six years later, had perhaps the finest record of all the ships constructed by Donald McKay the greatest of the clipper designers. The wooden clippers had a way of slipping through the Tropics, although McKay's were not on the whole fast in light airs. It was strong quartering winds that suited them. They forced their way to San Francisco round the Horn with desperate sail carrying. Their traditions were quite remote from those of the old Navy. They were of course specialised, few in number and many American; but it seems fair to suggest that they set men's minds away from life aboard the wooden line-of-battleships.

To return to the earlier period it is worth examining a record which has been preserved<sup>1</sup> of the work of the Channel fleet on an experimental cruise in the summer of 1831 when ships which had been laid up in ordinary in the naval anchorages were once more sent to sea. They were under the command of Sir Edward Codrington,

<sup>1</sup> Codrington, *Memoirs* ii, pp. 479-81.

the victor of Navarino, whose account of the Glorious first of June has been followed so closely. These were the days when admirals took their sons as flag captains. The names of those of post-rank in this fleet will still recall the wars against Napoleon: Dundas, Hyde Parker, Rowley, Pigot, Troubridge and Napier.

They had an exercise of great guns and small arms in the fine calm weather. The admiral remarked that it was as simple to make a landfall in the Channel by night as by day because of the good provision of lighthouses. The *Asia* and the *Donegal* looked beautiful and the ships were exercised in tacking both together and in succession in the early morning. That day they had a stiff topgallant breeze and the admiral's party visited the Eddystone. Among his guests was old Sir Gilbert Blane, who had been physician of the fleet to Rodney at the battle of the Saints' Passage. The revival of the ancient custom of sending guardships to sea in the summer months was widely welcomed. Sitting in his cabin at his unaccustomed naval desk work Codrington let his mind turn to the ill effects of jobbing and of patronage.

The memories of far wars long ago controlled promotion. The post captains list was crowded with senior officers who had held commands for years before the peace. Maitland, who had received Napoleon in the *Bellerophon*, had only just attained to flag rank. William IV retained his hearty interest in a service for which his brother George IV had never cared. He had a love for ceremonial and decided views on naval uniform; he was loyal to his friendships and his simple grudges. This was the era of the Trafalgar captains who, headed by the new King's friend, Admiral Hargood, had now come into their own. At the beginning of the reign in 1830 the first Naval Lord was Nelson's Hardy. Collingwood's flag captain Rotheram commanded Greenwich Hospital. The flag officers on the active list recall a roll of the fortunate and experienced officers who had managed to command Lord Nelson's seventy-fours in his last battle; Laforey of the *Spartiate*; Bayntun of the *Leviathan*; Durham of the *Defiance*; Morris of the *Colossus*; Berry of the *Agamemnon*; King of the *Achille*; Israel Pellew of the *Conqueror*; Harvey of the *Téméraire*. The commander-in-chief at Plymouth was Northesk, who had been rear-admiral at Trafalgar. It was a season of old man's glory.

There was very little to turn to save patronage at a time when out of ninety-five capital ships only seventeen were in full com-

mission. The great eighteenth century families were fading out, but the quarterdecks of flagships were still crowded with their friendship and alliance. As yet there were no manœuvres and specialisation had not begun. There were just faint signs of it, for instance the *Excellent* gunnery school had been established. It was certainly hard to differentiate between the capacity of the many officers, and the chief element in appointments was not capacity but claim. In this connection it is worth quoting a note written<sup>1</sup> by Commodore Purvis then senior officer on the South American station. "As I have no followers I promise you anything I may have in my power to give you." This letter to a young lieutenant conjures up a vision of those great flag officers whose many followers must divide their own rich harvest.

Above all, those who secured appointments entered on a leisured life. Opportunities for sport were now increasing and there was a certain development of reading. The line-of-battleships in these last days were loftier between decks and the captains' cabins were wide and roomy. The fashion of hard drinking was dying out. Among senior officers there was a trenchant insistence upon moral standards. In this connection the notes on Captain Pasley's reading during the commission in which he commanded the *Curaçoa* are most instructive. When recovering from bronchitis off Montevideo he read Prescott's *Government of Mexico*, lent him by Charles Talbot, the captain of the *Vestal*. There in his fore cabin, where he had been puzzled where to hang his cot because of the height of the 32-pounders, he had settled down when suffering from the asthma to read Balzac's *Véronique*. He was too tired for his accustomed recreations of drawing and sketching and turned to the same author's *Béatrix*. "I think," he wrote in regard to these unlikely presents, "his men and women are the most immoral in the world." Away in the *Gorgon*, Lieutenant McClintock, later the famous admiral and explorer, was ploughing through the volumes of Alison's *History of Europe*, a work which exacted application. The *Christian Year* was read and Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*. Cooper Key would each day study one of the *Plain Sermons*. Officers of a serious cast of mind now turned definitely to Bible reading. At Haslar in particular there was at this time a religious circle. There was a very small Tractarian element which Montagu Burrows can represent, but it was the Evangelical clergymen of solid views who influenced their naval sons and brothers.

<sup>1</sup> Letter printed in Colomb's *Cooper Key*, p. 95.

Living at Rydal on half-pay Captain Pasley noted in his journal, "4 October, 1835. The third centenary of the Reformation. Blessed be God." For the rest of the century this element, waxing and waning, would remain a constant factor.

As one reads, a striking picture emerges of those long quiet voyages under sail with few professional preoccupations. The following quotation refers again to the *Ĉuraçoa* bound for Montevideo. "At 6.0 p.m. we turn the hands up to dance and skylark and the men on one side are dancing to the bugle and fiddle; on the other they are playing at two or three different games. On the quarterdeck the youngsters are skylarking and racing up aloft." Thus opens the reign of Queen Victoria.

## *The Period of Sail and Steam*

IN A TIME of swift development it is not easy to disentangle the successive phases. Steamers appeared first as auxiliaries, as tugs or similar small vessels useful for work in harbour; it was many years before they were accepted as valuable in war. For various reasons it was only with the coming of the wooden screw-driven line-of-battleship that steam power was accepted in the main fleet. Yet even then it was two full generations before the practice of seamanship under sail began to suffer.

At the same time sailors were still regarded as a body very separate from the general population. Their character suffered some aspersion. Thus prints of naval seamen ashore published in 1825 recount the adventures of "tight lads" at the hands of the constables,<sup>1</sup> and the two songs of "The Sailor's Frolic" and "Ratcliffe Highway in 1842" carry forward the same legend. This was the last period of the old built-up romanticism. The songs in question, however, refer to seamen in the Port of London rather than specifically to naval ratings. Some verses and a refrain will give an impression<sup>2</sup> of the first broadsheet.

Come, all you jolly Seamen,  
And listen unto me;  
Avast a while, I'll make you smile,  
And tell you of a spree.

There's funny craft in Wapping,  
In streaming colours gay,  
And Pirates too, and Fire-Ships  
In Ratcliffe Highway.

So mind those buxom lasses  
In their flying colours gay,  
Or soon they'll clear your lockers,  
In Ratcliffe Highway.

<sup>1</sup> Described by Commander C. N. Robinson, R.N., *Mariner's Mirror*, vol. ii, p. 361.

<sup>2</sup> *Sea Songs*, ed. John Ashton.



At the fam'd Old Barley Mow  
Hail'd a Frigate tight,  
Steer'd away, without delay,  
And boarded her that night.

She took my watch and money too,  
And clothes, without delay,  
Two bullies soon they turn'd me out  
Into Ratcliffe Highway.

The same theme is illustrated in "Ratcliffe Highway in 1842":

One night a lady did me drag,  
To have a spree at the Lamb and Flag,  
There she got drunk, and got in a row,  
And sold her shoes at the Barley Mow.

There is eels and shrimps as black as fleas,  
And a covey a selling blue grey peas,  
There's ugly Bet, and Dandy Jane,  
At the King William in Gravel Lane.

Yes, you'll see some girls as smart and neat,  
As the Dowager Queen of Otaheite,  
There's every colour, indeed 'tis true,  
Green, black and purple, yellow and blue.

Listen you jovial sailors gay  
To the rigs of Ratcliffe Highway.

From one angle these quotations will seem very trivial but they reflect an impression in the popular mind at the time when the engineers were making headway. Thus the development of steam power in the Navy can be envisaged as an attack on the old sailing world by commercial interests and men of applied science who were well outside it.

Before the invention of the screw and its large scale application, the use of steam power for seagoing naval ships hardly progressed beyond the experimental stage. The disadvantages of paddle-steamers were very obvious. Paddle wheel casings heavily reduced the arc of

fire; they were very vulnerable to an enemy; they seriously impeded the vessel's sailing qualities. For different reasons iron in its earlier forms was not favoured for warship building. The research put into methods of strengthening the wooden ships made the designers sceptical of the resisting power of the ordinary iron steamer hull to the modern shell fire which had lately been introduced. The *Birkenhead*, whose loss off the Cape was to be one of the most famous of sea tragedies, was built as an iron paddle frigate; it was the conviction of the Admiralty that her sides would be torn to pieces by the effect of shot which led to her conversion as a transport. This was in 1849 and by that time the trials between the screw-driven *Rattler* and the paddle sloop *Alecto* had convinced naval opinion that the screw had come to stay.

As far as its capital ships were concerned, the Navy passed direct from the sailing vessel without auxiliary power to the wooden screw line-of-battleship. This new type was to form the backbone of that fine squadron which Admiral Napier led into the Baltic in the Crimean war. They were the favourite ships of senior officers and steam could be treated as an auxiliary. "You must know,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Captain B. J. Sullivan during that expedition, "that the screw steamers never get up steam except in cases of emergency and they act quite as sailing vessels." The engines were kept well out of the way and a prejudice against high pressure steam assisted such a policy. Tubular boilers and oscillating cylinders had been approved by the Admiralty since 1843; but for a number of years the pressure seldom exceeded twenty-two or thirty pounds. The coal capacity was very limited. It is no wonder that the conversion to screw did not greatly affect the minds of admirals.

The stowage space was reduced by the introduction of engine and boiler rooms and bunkers. Defects in the ship were blamed upon these innovations. "The fact is," noted<sup>2</sup> Captain Sullivan, "it is the large screw ships which have been unhealthy. The sailing ships have not had a case of cholera. The heat of the engines confined under the deck seems to cause it. In *Edinburgh* they have their boilers confined under the after part of the ship, and the cockpit, where the officers sleep, is terribly hot when steam is up." It is not surprising that steam was not up too often.

It was a strange period. Many very old ships had been converted

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of Admiral Sir B. J. Sullivan*, ed. H. N. Sullivan, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Entry under 10th July, 1854, *ibid*, p. 199.

into steamers like the *Ajax*, *Horatio* and *Nelson* which had been launched in the last years of the French wars. The *Agamemnon* and the *St. Jean d'Acre* completed in 1852-3 had been laid down as screw ships. Others like the *Duke of Wellington* and the *Sanspareil* had been provided with steam power when on the stocks. In the light of these facts it is instructive to read another of Captain Sullivan's pointed comments. "The *Duke of Wellington*," he wrote,<sup>1</sup> "sails beautifully, particularly off the wind, when the old block-ships have difficulty in keeping up under all sail; but to-day, blowing a good topgallant breeze, on a wind, she did not spare others much canvas, and *Edinburgh* and *Hogue* nearly kept way with her. *St. Jean d'Acre* running free comes nearly up to the *Duke*. *Boscawen* is also one of the fastest, and keeps up the credit of the Symondites." It was under full sail that they approached the Russian war.

The great difficulty in the years of peace had been the problem of manning the expanded Navy which any outbreak of hostilities would inevitably require. The system of impressment had not been enforced since 1815 and now for twenty years public opinion would no longer tolerate the activities of the press gang. The naval officers had continuous service with extremely long intervals of half-pay: the men had not.

Plans had been made for the establishment of long-term recruitment, but they had not been brought into effect. The position was complicated by the fact that Sir James Graham, who had come back to the Admiralty after twenty years, had produced a measure by which seamen would be secured through a bounty offered to those who volunteered on the outbreak of war. In consequence of faulty drafting the Bounty Bill would have enabled men already serving to claim the benefit. It was maintained that this would have cost the Treasury the sum of half a million pounds. Thus political difficulties added to the problem of how to provide an adequate supply of seamen.

This was the time of the aftermath of Chartism. The Russian war now gradually becoming imminent made small appeal. In the seaports France was the traditional antagonist. She was shortly to appear in the unaccustomed guise of an ally. The sense of the vital need to defend the country, which pressed so strongly on the nation during the French and German wars, was in this case absent.

Two other factors tended, as has been indicated, to draw the men

<sup>1</sup> Entry under 14th April, 1854, *ibid*, p. 132.

away. The expanding markets, the sense of material conquest and the new scientific spirit brought about the invention of steam transport and equally the last perfection of the sailing ship. It was now possible to combine high speed and the space for valuable cargoes in a ship which had in consequence a beauty of line and a grace under full sail which the eighteenth century could not achieve. It is not surprising that the younger generation was attracted to the clippers or to the new iron steamers.

The great exhibition was just concluded. England realised her high commercial destiny and her heritage of science and was but little conscious of the Navy. Tennyson had just gone to Farringford. Thackeray had produced *The Newcomes*. The great public had been absorbed in Dickens's *Bleak House*. They were about to be given *Little Dorrit*. The middle classes were far from the sea.

It may be said that, in spite of widespread support for strong measures against Russia, the Crimean war broke upon an apathetic English public. The area of rivalry was far away and the occasion of conflict indecipherable. The available merchant seamen were not attracted by the rates of pay and there was understandably no feeling that England stood in peril. One new element in the naval situation was the purely political and civilian character which the office of first Lord of the Admiralty had now acquired. This last matter had several consequences.

The Admiralty had by this time become, as it was to remain, a post in the administration to be distributed among claimants like any other. In peace-time it was not an office of the first rank and it no longer presupposed those naval contacts which the civilian heads of the Board of Admiralty had possessed in the high eighteenth century. Its holders came and went with the kaleidoscope of Whig and Tory ministries. Between the two periods of Sir James Graham's tenure of the office, there had passed a swiftly changing series of high-ranking politicians. The Duke of Northumberland was, it is true, a distinguished flag officer, but there was very little connection with the sea in the long succession of Victorian peers, Minto, Auckland, de Grey, Ellenborough, Northbrook and Haddington. The wheel had come full circle and now, with war approaching, Sir James Graham was at his post again. It is worth pausing for a little to consider his significance. This is the more important because as

first Lord he took a share in the war time responsibilities of his office which was not to be paralleled again until the advent of Winston Churchill.

Sir James Graham of Netherby in the county of Cumberland, member of Parliament for Carlisle, was a great landowner of generous instincts, strict propriety and Whig antecedents who had early inherited a compact property of some twenty-six thousand acres. His power was considerable in the administrations in which he served; he had *carte blanche* from the then premier, Lord Aberdeen. He had that gift of intense application which his friend William Ewart Gladstone admired so deeply. With this there went a capacity for argument which was convincing and sustained but not compressed. Above all Graham had, behind his staid Victorian humour and his devoted domesticity, a moral fire. Beyond the fact of his great stature and his heavy well-cased figure his portraits succeed in suggesting a high rectitude and a conscious and noble self-possession. At the Admiralty he would sit far into the night mastering his papers.

Sir James Graham was not without his service connections. His uncle the eighth Earl of Galloway had been an admiral of the Blue and had commanded a frigate at Cape St. Vincent. His brother was at this time a captain in command of the *Rodney*, an old line-of-battleship, his younger son a midshipman in the *St. Jean d'Acre*. His temperament was hardly cheerful and the assaults of rheumatism and the gout made him abstemious. He was the chief supporter in the Cabinet of the expedition to the Crimea.

The Prince Consort's influence was in its hey-day and we can follow the development of the situation in the submissions made by the first Lord to the Queen a few weeks before the ultimatum was delivered. This letter will also serve to introduce the question of Admiral Napier's appointment. "The number of ships,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Sir James Graham after his formal opening, "to be employed (in the Baltic) and the probable co-operation of a French squadron, makes the appointment of an admiral or a vice-admiral indispensably necessary. Of Admirals there are but two whom Sir James Graham could venture to mention as eligible for this important command. These two are Lord Dundonald and Sir William Parker. Lord Dundonald is seventy-nine years of age and though his energies and

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 9th February, 1854, printed in *Life and Letters of Sir James Graham*, by C. S. Palmer, ii, pp. 228-9.

faculties are unbroken, and with his accustomed courage he volunteers for the service, yet on the whole there is reason to apprehend that he might deeply commit the force under his command in some desperate enterprise. Age has not abated the adventurous spirit of this gallant officer, which no authority could restrain." It is interesting to observe the cautious and Victorian terminology, the lengthening black-coated sentences.

"Sir William Parker's health is failing," noted the first Lord in reference to the second candidate. "He desires rest and well deserves it. Of vice-admirals there are but two whose fitness for this command has come under discussion. These are Sir George Seymour and Sir Charles Napier. Sir George Seymour is absent in North America, and Sir James Graham could not advise that the command of the North Sea fleet should be kept open to await his return."

We then reach the curving involuted paragraphs in which the preference of the first Lord is enshrined. "The choice would seem," the letter now continues, "to fall on Sir Charles Napier. Sir Charles is an excellent seaman and combines boldness with discretion. As a second he may not have been submissive, as a chief he has been successful in command. If he has the faults of his family, he is not without their virtues. Courage, genius, love of country are not wanting, and the weighty responsibilities of a high command would give steadiness to his demeanour. He behaved ill to Lord John Russell and to Sir Francis Baring, and on shore he has given just cause of complaint. But at sea and in command he is a different person."

Such was the carefully guarded recommendation which Sir James Graham offered on behalf of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier, K.C.B. The congestion of promotion and the advanced age of senior officers had narrowed down the field of selection to this one admiral of nearly seventy. If this was the situation in regard to personnel, how did the Navy stand as to material? It is worth considering the units that were available at that time in home waters for these would constitute the North Sea fleet.

There was in the first place a squadron at Lisbon which was about to be recalled to England. It was composed of three line-of-battleships, the *Duke of Wellington*, *St. Jean d'Acre* and *Prince Regent*, and five steam frigates: *Impérieuse*, *Arrogant*, *Tribune*, *Odin* and *Valorous*. Two more ships of the line were at Portsmouth and three at Plymouth newly commissioned. Two further battleships were com-

commissioning at the Nore. Three blockships at Portsmouth and Plymouth and an ordinary guard ship from each of the three principal naval ports were also ordered to join the fleet. The *Ajax* was brought back from Cork and the *Boscawen* held at Chatham where she was commissioning as flagship in the West Indies. The *St. George*, which had lain in the Hamoaze wearing the broad pennant of the commodore superintendent, was added likewise. At Spithead they assembled: under sail they looked magnificent.

It is difficult to obtain a just estimate of the officer selected to command them. His was a vivid personality which lent itself to caricature in a staid age. Sir John Laughton's notice would seem to err on the side of severity. It is hard to focus Admiral Napier. He was a nephew of the celebrated Lady Sarah Lennox and a cousin of the Napier generals. He had wealth, a flair for spending and in his early years courageous mechanical invention. He was very Scottish with the temperament of the Jacobites in foreign service, and rather fey. It was said that he did not stint himself in whisky.

His past was brilliant. All men knew his work in the *Jason* and *Euryalus* as a frigate captain in the old wars. He was justifiably proud of his cutting-out expedition at Ponza; the phraseology of that time remained with him. He had seen successful service against the "Miguelistas" when in command of the Portuguese fleet of Queen Maria da Gloria. Of necessity he had been much unemployed. He was anti-ministerialist, cross-grained and rancorous. He had held the seat for Marylebone.

His stepson has left us a description of Commodore Napier as he appeared at the close of 1840 after his quarrel with Admiral Stopford at the siege of St. Jean d'Acre. His build was heavy and he weighed fourteen stone. There were bushy eyebrows above that dark gnarled face framed in its scraggy greying uncurled whiskers. His full height was not apparent, for he stooped from a wound in the neck and went lame from another gained ashore before Busaco under Wellington. He was singularly untidy and self-confident. On his breast he wore, beside the ribbon of the Bath, a host of orders, the Knight's Cross of Maria Theresa; the Russian Knight's Cross of the Red Eagle; the first class of the Medjidie. He was Count of Cape St. Vincent in the kingdom of Portugal and Algarve. This was not altogether the picture conjured up by the first Lord of the Admiralty's discreet phrasing.

On 28th February, 1854, ultimatums were sent to the government

of St. Petersburg by Great Britain, France and Sardinia. These Powers thus came to support the Turkish Sultan. Five days earlier Sir Charles Napier had been formally offered the command of the North Sea fleet, and had accepted. He had gone down to Spithead and had hoisted his flag on board the *Princess Royal* 91, "which he found<sup>1</sup> from some accident ashore upon the Middle Bank." Her captain Lord Clarence Paget has described the commander-in-chief's arrival. "I had known," he writes,<sup>2</sup> "Sir C. Napier many years, and was one of those who highly disapproved of his conduct in Syria in 1840." This meeting was, however, marked by some cordiality. "He (Sir Charles) finished half a dozen cigars and said he had a deuce of a job in hand."

The first difficulty was the supply of seamen. A proposal to ask for volunteers from among the crews of yachts owned by private gentlemen and to send out the complement of the royal yachts on active service was rejected as alarmist. The time-honoured method of advertisement was relied upon with scant results. "By dint of hand-bills and touting of all sorts," noted Lord Clarence Paget<sup>3</sup> in regard to the manning of the *Princess Royal*, "we managed to enter at the average twenty to thirty per week, such as they were. Scarcely any of them had been in a man-of-war, and consequently they were entirely ignorant of the management of great guns and muskets." Another testimony is that of Captain Sullivan. "The deficiency of seamen was made up by shipping cabmen and others who had never been to sea."<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately there was no immediate haste as the ships swung at anchor in Spithead. The ice which contained the Russian fleet in its Baltic harbours would not break up till May. On 11th March Napier shifted his flag to the *Duke of Wellington* and made Commodore Seymour, one of the few officers who had served with him, captain of the fleet. Meanwhile some old seamen, who had been employed as riggers in the dockyards, became available. A proportion of coast-guardmen were also drafted to the squadron. These latter were valuable on account of their strict discipline, but many had no sea experience for they "had been placed in the coastguard from 'interest' and knew little of seamanship." Still even at the end there was a

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Baltic Campaign of 1854*, by G. Butler Earp, p. 11. This is the account compiled in 1856 with Admiral Napier's assistance.

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography and Journals of Admiral Lord Clarence E. Paget*, G.C.B., ed. Sir Arthur Otway, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> *Journals of Admiral Sir B. J. Sullivan*, p. 122.



shortage. The *Prince Regent* was three hundred and seventy short of her full complement, the former crew having been turned over to the *Neptune*, and the *Boscawen* needed one hundred and five to bring her up to strength. On the quarterdeck this position was quite reversed. Officers with claims besieged the Admiralty. Public opinion warmed to the fine squadrons. The Queen in her yacht led the fleet to sea. It was an era of great expectations.

Sir James Graham had been strenuous and vigilant; he was not unnaturally now disquieted. The first requirement was a close blockade. A powerful fleet was in the Mediterranean under the command of Vice-Admiral Dundas, and the first Lord had brought back the British Minister in Stockholm, Rear-Admiral Lyons, to strengthen him as second in command. This left the coast of England undefended when once Napier had taken his squadrons to the Baltic. The *Neptune* was refitting and the *Hannibal* commissioning at the Nore, but both these ships were due to sail eastwards to join the North Sea fleet. There were no other large men-of-war in English waters except a guardship each at Portsmouth and Plymouth and the *Waterloo*, flagship at Sheerness. The country required security for coasts and commerce, but the Government stood badly in need of a naval victory. Their policy was already criticised.

No one shared this desire for a victory more fully than Sir Charles Napier. Before quitting Kioge Bay he made the following signal to his squadron. "Lads,<sup>1</sup> war is declared, we have a bold and numerous enemy to meet. Should they offer you battle, you know how to dispose of them. Should they remain in port, we must try and get at them. Success depends on the quickness and precision of your fire. Sharpen your cutlasses, and the day is your own." It was the difficulty of the situation that sharpened cutlasses were not enough.

The interest of these operations does not lie in the results achieved but rather in the emergence of new factors. Already there was faintly discernible the shape of things to come. Through his apologist, Napier seems to admit that he was using in his signal "the language to which sailors love to listen." It is clear that the admiral's mind was really exercised by the new devices of the Russians, their engines and their gunboats and the "infernal machines" that they were laying. He was very old, but he had been inventive.

<sup>1</sup> Printed in *Baltic Campaign*, p. 97.

The local problems set were many and various. Such reliable information as could be obtained was usually provided by the British diplomatic and consular representatives. By the time the fleet had reached Kiøge Bay near Copenhagen the *Chargé d'Affaires* in Stockholm had reported that the ice was still very strong between Åland and Åbo, although there was less ice than was usual at this time of year in the Gulf of Bothnia. Advices from Reval made it clear that the fair water leading to that port was free already.

At the same time offers of help were made to Napier which were at the best very remotely valuable. Thus Mr. Peto, whose express steamers plying in the Baltic had already been placed at the Admiralty's disposal, explained that he was negotiating with the Danish government for a concession for a railroad between Flensburg and Tønning on the German Ocean. He pointed out that Tønning was only 235 miles from "Lowestoff." This must have envisaged a long war.

When the squadron reached the 55th degree of north latitude the admiral, according to instructions, had opened his sealed orders. He was disturbed at the possibility of the Russian warships eluding him in the foggy weather that accompanies the break-up of the Baltic ice. He pressed on the Admiralty the great need for small steamers to act as dispatch boats and fire vessels. He noted that ten thousand muskets and thirty-two cases of Congreve rockets had arrived at Lübeck on Russian government account. He sent forward to London the plans for a gunboat which had been submitted to him.

It is interesting to observe that little difficulty was made in regard to the fleet lying in a neutral anchorage. The admiral in fact used as his rendezvous the fine natural harbour at Kiel in Holstein which was then still Danish territory. The shortage of personnel caused Napier concern, and difficulty was experienced in raising pilots. "I hope," wrote the first Lord,<sup>1</sup> "that you have been able to enter men in the Baltic." Admiral Berkeley, a naval Lord, gave impetus to the same question. "Have any of your ships," he asked,<sup>2</sup> "tried for men in a Norwegian port? It is said that you might have any number of good seamen from that country." It is not surprising that the commander-in-chief was cautioned to "enter them quietly."

Meanwhile the Admiralty continued to ply Napier with information. It was said that the Russians were fitting their gunboats with

<sup>1</sup> Letter printed in *Baltic Campaign*, p. 47.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 81.

disc steam engines. The enemy was reported to have laid seventy mines and placed booms at Cronstadt and Sweaborg and Reval. The changing of the buoys and the removal of the lighthouse structures in the Gulf of Finland had been already noted. The consul at Riga<sup>1</sup> sent information of the destruction by the Russians of the lighthouse at Dünemunde, "making the navigation of the Livonian Gulf impracticable as it formed a landmark in these shallow and intricate waters." Except for those at Näskars and Enskärs, there were no lights showing on the Finnish coasts. At the same time the Russians were strengthening their defences. Soldiers were pouring into Reval past the low level regular Vauban ramparts. The Aland Islands garrison was being reinforced over the ice from Finland. Across the western territories of Russia the peasants were clearing the roads of snow to permit the passage of artillery. There were references to the use of the electric telegraph for communication. During these months an agent sold to Admiral Napier a set of drawings of the "infernal machines" which the Russians were sinking in the Cronstadt channels.

It was long before the Baltic winter lifted. At the end of April the Admiral had taken the squadron to Elsnigabben at the entrance to the seaway into Stockholm. They met a heavy gale and snow-storm as they settled down to set up rigging and equalise coals and provisions. Captain Sullivan provides a vivid glimpse of the conditions. "We have had," he recorded in his journal,<sup>2</sup> "a great part of yesterday and all to-day a north-east gale with rain, sleet and snow mixed, and the thermometer below the freezing point at night and very little higher by day. It is just like a very bad winter's day in the Falkland Islands. The land is patched with white, and looking very miserable." He noted that the lower decks of the big ships must be most bitterly cold. They had no stoves in their large wardrooms.

From the Admiralty came words of caution. "I by no means contemplate," wrote the first Lord,<sup>3</sup> "an attack either on Sweaborg (the harbour outside Helsingfors) or Cronstadt; I have a great respect for stone walls, and have no fancy for running even screw line-of-battleships against them, because the public here may be impatient. You must not risk the loss of a fleet in an impossible enterprise." There was caution, too, from another angle. The commander-in-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Entry under 19th April, 1854, *Journals of Sir Admiral B. J. Sullivan*, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Sir James Graham dated 11th May, 1854, printed in *Life and Correspondence of Admiral Sir Charles Napier*, by Major-General Elers Napier, ii, p. 239.

chief had already been warned<sup>1</sup> to "hold hard in the expenditure of shells for practice."

The French alliance had borne its fruit. The screw line-of-battleship *Austerlitz* had lately joined him and on 13th June Admiral Parseval-Deschesnes flying his flag in *L'Inflexible* sailed into Baro Sound at the head of a squadron of three ships of the line and six frigates of the *Sémillante* class. None of these possessed auxiliary steam power, but one steam frigate and four smaller vessels accompanied the squadron of sailing ships.

In his sanguine moments Admiral Napier had thought of a fleet action. "I am looking," he wrote<sup>2</sup> to the Surveyor of the Navy, Sir Baldwin Walker, a few days before the French arrived, "for the Cronstadt fleet to try to surprise me with my fires banked. I wish they would try it." That must have been self-evident, but there seems to have been no reason why the Grand Duke Constantine Nicolaievitch should have endangered his ships when his country was engaged upon a holding war. The summer was coming now, but in Baro Sound the fog still held. "We felt our way in," noted<sup>3</sup> Sullivan, "and got alongside the flagship, the fog as dense as ever. When I went on board her the chief was sitting in the stern gallery with the admiral and captains that had been dining there standing around him."

At home the greatly desired naval victory was gradually taking the shape of an attack on Cronstadt or Sweaborg as it became clear that the Russians were unlikely to undertake offensive action. The French and British admirals had independent commands, but it was known that the instructions from Paris envisaged an engagement with the fortress. In this connection a warning had already been sent out to Sir Charles. "The French admiral," wrote Sir James Graham,<sup>4</sup> "has some high-sounding instructions. Your duty does not extend to the impossible."

Nevertheless a reconnaissance in force was decided on, and there was a certain hankering after Cronstadt with all its advantages with the electorate. "We hear a good deal," explained the first Lord,<sup>5</sup> "of submarine barricades by which the north channel in Cronstadt is closed." He advised that diving bells and blasting under water

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Sir James Graham, dated 4th April, 1854, printed in *Baltic Campaign*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated from Baro Sound, 4th June, 1854, printed in Napier's *Life and Correspondence*, ii, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> Entry under 18th June, 1854, *Journals of Admiral Sir B. J. Sullivan*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 2nd May, 1854, printed in Graham's *Life and Letters*, ii, p. 230.

<sup>5</sup> Letter dated 28th May, 1854, printed in Napier's *Life and Correspondence*, ii, p. 248.

should be used to remove them. It was merely common form to add that "no rash experiments must be tried."

Towards the end of June some large ships from the allied fleets advanced towards the Russian citadel. The *Duke of Wellington* was preceded by the *Lightning*, steamer, a quarter of a mile ahead in order to clear any submerged machine from the flagship's passage. The Russian warships were moored head and stern under the lower batteries of Cronstadt thus closing the southern channel. The entrance to the fortress round the north was closed by a double row of piles with sunken granite blocks.

The island now completely freed from ice blocked the mouth of the Neva and the entrance to St. Petersburg. British officers landed on the abandoned lighthouse six miles down the gulf. They could see in the clear light of that northern day that one of the frigates had steam up, but there was no sign of movement. They stood on the platform of the lighthouse looking eastwards. The lamps had been removed and the glass whitewashed. The revolving frames were still in their place.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the low domes of the Orthodox Cathedral there stood redoubt after redoubt along the broad sandspit of the island which terminated in the harbour and the grim warehouses. They could make out the great fort of Risbank with its sixty guns commanding that narrow channel four fathoms deep which led towards the anchored Russian ships.

Even if an attack on a great fortress were practicable, there was here neither space nor depth enough to admit of ships being fairly placed against the batteries. Napier was disturbed lest in the dense smoke from the guns and funnels the ships might miss the channel and go ashore. While watching for submerged mines Rear-Admiral Chads hooked up a beacon which had got adrift.

The memory of Nelson dominated all these situations. "Nelson," wrote Captain Sullivan,<sup>2</sup> "never attacked a battery with ships except very slightly the first day at Tenerife. It is rather amusing to find ignorant persons talking and writing of what Nelson would have done, and to have a line of block ships and rafts at Copenhagen, which he attacked, compared to Cronstadt. This is the strongest fortress in the world." Admirals Napier and Parseval turned to a combined operation which would prove more practicable.

<sup>1</sup> Entries under 26th June and 1st July, 1854, *Journals of Admiral Sir B. J. Sullivan*, pp. 187-90.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Captain Sullivan to Captain Hamond written in 1856 and printed in Sullivan's *Journals*, p. 203.



ENGLISH AND FRENCH FLEETS IN THE BALTIC



The government of Napoleon III was only recently established. His ministers were anxious for military glory in respectable company. In consequence a force of ten thousand French soldiers was on its way out to the Baltic. It had been decided to use these troops to effect the capture of Bomarsund in the Aland Islands. At one time it had been hoped that the reduction of this western stronghold of the Russian power might induce Sweden to join the Allies; but it was now clear that in any event King Oscar I would not abandon his neutrality. It is of interest to note the degree to which the British Admiralty directed operations. "I am disposed," declared<sup>1</sup> Sir James Graham on July 2, "to begin with Bomarsund, but you and the French admiral must decide." "Bomarsund," the first Lord wrote<sup>2</sup> again some nine days later, "will already be within your reach. Sweaborg, if it were possible, would be a noble prize."

The Aland Islands, nearly three hundred in number, are an outcrop of the granite rock which forms the south-western coast of Finland. To the northward stretch away the broad waters of the Gulf of Bothnia. They lie across that drear and empty sea closing it wholly. The deeper channel is that between the Alands and the Swedish coast, a distance of only sixteen miles to Swedish territory. The ice held longer across the rather narrower stretch of sea between the eastern islands and the Finnish coast. In winter the wolves would pound across from the Russian forests. The people in the Alands were Swedish in type, Lutheran by faith, lithe and cleanly, altogether most appealing to the Evangelical English captains who now came among them. The islands had only been incorporated within the Russian Empire since their cession by Sweden under the terms of the Treaty of Frederikshamn in 1809.

The chief fortress, Bomarsund, held a long-term garrison of two thousand five hundred Russian troops. Among the trickle of deserters were some Polish Jews who had been serving in this Arctic wilderness for seven years. The attack was made in the brief summer. The intricate waterways had been carefully reconnoitred and in the first week of August the soldiers under the command of General Baraguay D'Hilliers had assembled in Faro Sound. This officer had an independent status and was not subordinate to either of the allied admirals. "The transports," wrote Napier, fretting at the delay,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter printed in Graham's *Life and Letters*, ii, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, ii, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated 3rd August, printed in Napier's *Life and Correspondence*, ii, p. 274.



"appear to have forgotten that this is August and we are in latitude 60.10". A week later the attack began.

Sir Charles Napier shifted his flag to the *Bulldog*, steamer, and went up with the troops, pushing his vessel and her consort the *Stromboli* into a creek when the soldiers landed. The population was friendly as they landed in that still northern heat. The roses were in bloom around the neat loghouses. The Bible was laid out on each kitchen dresser. The soldiers came on marching through the birch-trees and across the plantations of dwarf pine. The hill slopes rose up in their granite levels. The water was relatively deep steep-to the rocks, and the channels had that natural precision which marks the sea lanes east of Stockholm. At this season of the year the light never completely faded from the cold green waters. The contours of the whole eight parishes, which formed the Alands, showed humped and dark in the moonless twilight.

In the midst there had been built an alien fortress, Bomarsund, with its granite casemates "like a new terrace in a fashionable watering place," to use Sullivan's far-fetched simile. The garrison chapel was an outpost of the Orthodox Church with its gold and silver candelabra and its iconostasis. The problem was how to reduce this fortress with its two long tiers of guns, ninety-two in all, including those in the bastions and outworks.

In the first place Rear-Admiral Chads decided to bring ashore heavy artillery from the fleet. At five o'clock in the morning of August 10 parties of one hundred and fifty seamen were landed from each of the four largest vessels, *Edinburgh*, *Blenheim*, *Hogue* and *Ajax*. They dragged the guns and their carriages along on sledges built after a design invented by Captain Ramsay of the *Hogue*. The next day the seamen's parties were increased to two hundred from each ship. The guns were then brought forward four and a half miles "over execrable ground, the greater portion of which was steep rocky hills and ploughed fields." The ships' bands marched ahead playing as the sailors moved barefooted over the broken earth. The French had brought with them in their transports some eighty artillery horses and five hundred engineers.

The outlying batteries were silenced with the aid of the French infantry and the heavy guns were placed in position. Below in the channel the French and English steamers kept up a well-directed fire upon the fortress whose reply was not effective. It is curious to note that the rate of fire in the British ships was one shot and shell every

five minutes. On the 16th the French and British landing parties carried the fortress by assault. Over two thousand prisoners were taken. The military works were for the most part destroyed.

In England this operation was looked on as a prelude. "Sweaborg, if it were possible, would be a noble prize." This was made very clear to Admiral Napier. "I shall be anxious to hear what is your next move," wrote<sup>1</sup> Sir James Graham after offering his congratulations on the success, "surely either Abo or Reval is open to attack." The difficulties of the Crimean campaign were growing and a victory was needed more than ever. But already the winter was closing in. The French troops had gone home and the French squadron followed them. The curtain of fog and the driving rain broke once more upon the Baltic. "No man in his senses," wrote Napier in October,<sup>2</sup> "would undertake to attack Sweaborg at this season of the year."

The fleet was recalled to England and on reaching Spithead in December, Napier was ordered to strike his flag. It was his last service. An acrimonious dispute with Sir James Graham developed after the war. The admiral would always refer to Graham's "treachery." The fall of the Aberdeen administration brought down the first Lord in its collapse. His connection with the Navy ended. He retired to Netherby, to that great house with its grand Victorian front and the formal gardens. He would turn to his salmon fishing in the Esk and to his experimental farming. In the evening he would join with his family in Mendelssohn's duets and German choruses. Mr. Gladstone came to visit him and together they enjoyed singing "Annie Laurie." Over Sir James Graham's life there lay a consciousness of right endeavour. It was very different with Admiral Napier.

There is an element of greatness in the storm of his last years. The admiral had bought a house near Catherington, where Hood retired to, a modest place named Quallett's Grove which he called Merchiston. He would be seen standing by his gate on the Portsmouth Road talking to and assisting seamen. Back in the House of Commons he struggled forward speaking on naval matters, advocating allotments for seamen's wives and pensions and monthly payments and long leave for men whose ships were laid up in winter quarters. He pressed for an inquiry into the state of affairs at Greenwich Hospital. "It is seamen," he said,<sup>3</sup> "not ships that constitute a Navy."

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 22nd August, 1854, printed in Graham's *Life and Letters*, ii, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 10th August, 1854, *ibid*, ii, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Napier's *Life and Correspondence*, ii, p. 373.

In 1860, the last year of his life when his health was already failing, he became disturbed about the condition of the fortifications on the coast. "I will make my speech," he declared<sup>1</sup> to those who endeavoured to restrain him, "if I die on the boards of the House of Commons." A mirage of sea service came to him. "It is quite possible," he wrote<sup>2</sup> to his daughter, "that I may join Garibaldi. If he can get a fleet and offers it to me, I shall go." Towards the end of October he drove down to Portsmouth to spend two days at Spithead with his friend Captain Gordon on board the *Asia*, that fine old line-of-battleship built of teak in Bombay dockyard in the reign of George IV. On his return he was taken ill and died on 6th November. As he was carried to his grave under the yews of Catherington churchyard his friends looked down across the sloping lands to the waters of the Solent and Spithead. There in the late autumn sunshine lay the ships he had commanded, the units of the last great sailing fleet.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 385.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 385.

## *The Age of Ironclads*

AS ADMIRAL NAPIER lay dying, the first British sea-going ironclad, the armoured frigate *Warrior*, was completing on the stocks of the Thames Ironworks at Blackwall. She was a wholly new type of ship, different from the French *frégates blindées*, which were wooden vessels armoured, and destined to set a pattern for naval construction. She was an iron ship as the *Birkenhead* had been. It was therefore not the material of the hull which marked the change: the novelty was the wrought-iron armour plating to protect the guns on the main deck amidships. Her success doomed for ever the screw wooden line-of-battleships. Few changes have come so quickly. What did it bring to the naval life?

In many respects the quarter of a century between 1860 and 1885 is the most obscure and confusing period in the history of the Royal Navy. The literature in the days of sail is ample and when Captain Fisher and Captain Wilson reached post-rank we are already entering the well-documented stretches of the late nineteenth century. It is the 'sixties and the 'seventies to which we hardly have the clue.

The actual life on the lower deck is clearer than in the previous age. The system of continuous service for seamen and enlistment for ten years, which had been established in 1853, gave a strong framework to the men's routine. It was the era of the recruiting sergeant, that noisy, cheery, meretricious character who thrived against the sure drab peace-time background.

In 1859 training ships for boys had been established. In these years the *Britannia* at Dartmouth and the *Conway*, which would provide officers for the merchant service and thus for the Royal Naval Reserve, were both filled with cadets. It was a time of system. The Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers in which men of "good social standing" employed their leisure was characteristic of this period. The *Rainbow* was moored off Somerset House as their headquarters. The expression "patronage," used in the sense of Admiralty "patronage" now became meaningless. Firm regular promotion was in force.

Many treatises cover the subject of naval "material" during these decades. The changes of ship design across the years when the central

battery rigged ironclad was in fashion can be followed minutely. On the other hand there is a lack of information on the side of general naval history. The seventh and last volume of Clowes's *History of the Royal Navy* has the jejune quality of a work which deals with a period in which the confidential papers are not available. No volume in the Navy Records Society deals with a later date than the Crimean war. Even Admiral Colomb's study of Admiral Cooper Key has a muted character when it comes to the controversies of the 'sixties. It is not yet possible to reconstruct the outlook of the senior officers who were captains or held flag rank in those days. It is difficult to conceive how they would view the functions of the Navy.

It was a time of peace. There were the last small operations against the pirates on the China station and the Ashanti and Perak expeditions. The practice of using naval landing parties became well established. There took place in 1882 the bombardment of Alexandria. The naval history of the century is in fact, after the close of the great French wars, swung between bombardments for it opens with Pellew's attack on Algiers in 1816.

Attention has not been directed to the fact that the most significant event in contemporary naval development was the military defeat of France in 1870. The French Navy was in these years the most considerable continental force and yet, after the Franco-Prussian war, it must have been manifest that France was in no position to undertake again a major conflict. It is suggested that this gave to English naval thought the conviction of a deep security which issued in two decades of slow cumbersome experiment. The war scares raised by France in 1859-60 had passed away; it was a period without substantial danger.

It is true that by 1877 the possibility had arisen that Great Britain might be involved in the Russo-Turkish war; but such a conflict could hardly have involved a great fleet action. The preoccupations of Admiral Hornby, when the passage of the Dardanelles was mooted, turned upon the old problem of the warship faced by hostile forts. It was perhaps a consequence of this conviction of security that ships of indifferent fighting value were maintained for many years on distant stations. The *Audacious* remained as the flagship in China when far inferior in power to the vessels in which the French admirals in those waters wore their flags.

During these years much attention was directed to such naval engagements as took place. Lessons were drawn rapidly and opinions

were subscribed to. It is possible that in this connection the temperamental Victorian dogmatism helped to crystallise decided views. Minor actions led to great changes since there was in fact no naval battle between ships of the line during this period. The Austrian and Italian ships at Lissa were armoured and unarmoured frigates. There would be no engagement between battleships until the war between Russia and Japan in 1904-5. Inevitably the experimenters had but slight data on which to base their firm decisions.

Sir Reginald Custance in his *Ship of the Line in Battle* has dealt acutely with some of the characteristics of the first generation of ironclad navies. The turret-gun and armour developed almost simultaneously. The *Monitor*, whose action with the *Merrimac* in Hampton Roads in 1862 held the attention of the world, was a low freeboard armour-plated vessel carrying two 11-inch smooth bore guns in a turret which was revolved on a spindle by a steam engine. In consequence of this one engagement there came into being a class of coast defence ironclads which were not intended to steam with the fleet or to possess sea-keeping qualities.

Many years were to pass before the navies would deliver themselves free from this floating battery conception. In British naval thought conclusions were already formed as a result of the performance of the French floating batteries at Kinburn in the Crimean war. "In that day," writes<sup>1</sup> Admiral Custance of the operations before Kinburn, "was developed the theory that a small number of guns protected by armour are more effective than a great number without armour; that to protect yourself is more important than to destroy the enemy; that in battle the defensive is superior to the offensive. Hence came so-called impenetrable ships with few guns, coast-defence ships, coast fortifications, defence mines, etc. in exaggerated proportions." The author is writing with more heat than exactness; but the points made have their truth. In the 'sixties the idea of offensive power divorced from speed was especially deleterious.

This was a period of unresolved conflicts. Opposite and mutually destructive policies were carried forward together. Over all, past all the war scares, there brooded a semi-conscious sense of security. The great nation was lulled by its own opulence. It is also only fair to point out that whatever might be the naval threat implicit in French sea power the Foreign Office had good reason to know that the political position of Napoleon III was not strong enough to con-

<sup>1</sup> Custance, *The Ship of the Line in Battle*, p. 14.

stitute a menace to Great Britain. There was always a meretricious element in the martial set-up of the Second Empire. The changes, the delays, the needless variations of British naval policy can all be excused upon the ground that England was without a serious potential rival.

In this connection an article by M. Cuheval Clarigny on *Les Budgets de la Marine en France et en Angleterre* is full of interest. It contains<sup>1</sup> a high evaluation of the British coastguard system and draws attention to the blockships available for the defence of ports and naval arsenals. The budgets for both powers for 1860 are examined in detail. The authoritative character of Sir Howard Douglas's work on naval tactics is noted and various papers are described. The writer alludes to Douglas's conviction that the rôle reserved to sail power was still considerable, to Admiral Berkeley's statement that the smallest gunboat could be armed with cannon which were individually as powerful and destructive as those carried in the largest vessels and to Admiral Sartorius's view as to the difficulties of ships engaging land batteries even in a calm sea.

Perhaps the years following Tegetthoff's victory at Lissa over the Italian fleet in the summer of 1866 were the most difficult, for that engagement not only gave a fictitious value to the ram but it also demonstrated the weakness of unarmoured ships. Immediately the older British vessels of the line lost their importance; the Navy was now in consequence forced to rely for its effective strength on the ironclads, like the *Bellerophon* and her consorts, which were only slowly coming from the shipyards. No first-class naval vessels became so rapidly out of date as the seven last wooden line-of-battleships which were laid down on the principles of the Crimean fleet and converted on the stocks by cutting away the upper deck and giving them side armour. The *Lord Warden* and *Lord Clyde* were built in 1863 with wooden hulls to use up some of the great mass of timber. Abruptly one of the great naval pre-occupations, the provision of English oak and the supply of Norwegian and Baltic wood, ended for ever.

Another preoccupation which now passed away was the grading of harbours of refuge in relation to the prevailing wind. As late as 1847 it had been urged in favour of Milford Haven that a fleet could sail out from that anchorage with any wind that could bring a French fleet out of Brest or Rochefort. "The harbour may be

<sup>1</sup> Admiralty Library pamphlet, p. 123.

quitted," so runs the argument,<sup>1</sup> "with any wind from west by north round to south. It offers moreover to a ship making this harbour the extraordinary advantage of a channel on either hand ensuring an offing should it be necessary to haul off the land." Only sixteen years had passed and each phrase was obsolete. Havens became accessible to the steam fleets at all states of the weather. It was only the depth of water that remained a controlling factor. This was in offensive and defensive thought an era of coast defence.

The ships of the Channel fleet of the later 'sixties were strictly limited in their range of action under steam. Their bunker space was most insufficient. They could hardly contemplate a voyage to Gibraltar and home again using only the new motive power. The chequer pattern of black and white had vanished with the wooden vessels. These first ironclads were hot and painted black and extraordinarily uncomfortable. The age-long tradition of wooden ship-building was ended. It took some time to accustom designers to the detailed application of the new material. The old wooden bulwarks, so useful against splinters, were transferred to the ironclads and seven foot high iron bulwarks were universal in all ships from sloops to battleships. The wardroom was placed amidships on the after part of the orlop deck. There were no ports and only inadequate overhead ventilation. Candles burned all day in their sockets above the worn settees. Officers' cabins opened directly out of the wardroom to port and starboard. Situated on the orlop deck these cabin floors were all below the waterline and the small scuttles in the ironclad's side were never unplugged at sea and not always when the ship lay at Spithead or at the outer Nore. Tallow candles alone lit the gloom of these cramped spaces. The captain's quarters were, of course, better. The captain's cabin was in the stern on the maindeck and had large square ports. The ship's office and accommodation for the heads of departments was placed just forward of the captain's flat.

These ironclads were powerful for their epoch but had some of the qualities of coastguard ships. In naval matters the farther oceans were still thought of in terms of sail. For one thing coaling stations were only slowly established. It was held that all sea-going vessels must be either ship-rigged or barque-rigged. It is true that it would not long be possible to maintain the value of the sailing qualities of the armoured ironclads; but meanwhile the traditional

<sup>1</sup> Admiralty Library pamphlet, p. 122.



Navy was all about them. In 1862 Captain Hornby entered<sup>1</sup> in his diary a note on Vice-Admiral Rigault de Genouilly's squadron which some units from the Mediterranean fleet had encountered in the Bay of Naples. "There is no ship among them to compare with the *James Watt* (of Napier's fleet), and they do not look so neat aloft."

Only four years earlier the wooden screw line-of-battleship *Sans Pareil*, whose coal capacity was 140 tons, had been towed for a week on her homeward voyage since she had not enough fuel to steam against the monsoon down the China Sea. In the case of following or quartering winds the difference in speed between sailing and steam ships was at this period not considerable. The reinforcements sent from England to India during the Mutiny were dispatched in sailing vessels.

Among the ships taken up as transports were the fastest of the Australian black ballers. There is an account of the *Oneida* homeward bound speaking the *James Baines* and the *Champion of the Seas* on their voyage to India. The description is singularly vivid. It was on 17th August, 1857, and the *James Baines* was surging along under a cloud of canvas with thirty-four sails set, including three sky sails, sky stunsails and moonsail. The sunlight was reflected from her white lower masts and blue waterways. Her figurehead was black relieved with gilding representing Mr. James Baines of the Blackwall Line in broadcloth and top hat. White straking ran above her black-painted great length to the carved orb at her stern. Her rail was red with the jackets of the cheering troops of the 97th regiment embarked at Portsmouth.

These were the days of the old and simple "tramp and go" chorus:

What shall we do with the drunken sojer?  
What shall we do with the drunken sojer?  
Put him in the roundhouse till he's sober,  
Early in the morning.

Thus the last sailing transports made southward through the Trades to their imperial war.

In contrast to this picture of the open ocean the ironclad embodied the idea of heavy armament in confined waters. Closely allied with this there went the coastal battery. Captain Cooper Key, whose

<sup>1</sup> Diary under 29th April, 1862, printed in the *Life of Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, G.C.B.*, by Mrs. Egerton, p. 90.

earlier career has been followed, now recommended a chain of towers at every part of the southern side of the Isle of Wight where a landing might be effected.

The members of the Royal Commission appointed in August, 1859, to examine the defences of the United Kingdom recommended the construction of those forts in Spithead which gave its characteristic appearance to that anchorage in the late nineteenth century. It was the period of fear of small gun-vessels. These same commissioners considered<sup>1</sup> that Portsmouth dockyard could be set on fire and almost entirely destroyed by rifled ordnance at a distance of eight thousand yards and that a hostile flotilla of small ships armed with rifled guns might occupy Spithead and the Horse Sand. The dockyard could then be bombarded without the enemy approaching within three thousand yards of any existing works. The idea of armament and range was gaining at the expense of mobility. No one was more closely concerned in this development than a youngish naval officer of a restless positive inquiring mind and a singular self-confidence who lived with his wife in the Isle of Wight. At Somerset Cottage amid the Victorian proprieties of Ventnor there was established Captain Phipps Cowper Coles. There he sat writing and planning in the mild sunshine at those open windows. It was there that he designed the *Captain*.

Coles was swift to reply to the commissioners. The forts he thought fantastic. "Have they," he inquired,<sup>2</sup> "ever considered the effect of the indraught of smoke through the one hundred and twenty embrasures of the fort after the few first guns have been fired?" He was busy even then with the idea of guns with revolving shields and gun-vessels to move about that "very spacious area<sup>3</sup> with never less than thirty feet at low water spring tides." His mind was dominated by the idea of the defence of the great naval arsenal, and his friends came to reinforce his own conceptions.

"I say," wrote<sup>4</sup> Captain Sherard Osborne of the ship he then commanded, "that the *Donegal* under steam, drawing twenty-seven feet water, shall rattle about the waters of Spithead at eight knots an hour, hit the dockyard every time with her 100 pounders, and that not one in two hundred shots shall hit her. All the engineers in all the forts shall fail to give her range or position for more than a

<sup>1</sup> Admiralty Library pamphlet, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Admiralty Library, Captain Coles's pamphlets, p. 115, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 6.      <sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

minute at a time." From such varied data, and from the experience of the *Monitor* in Hampton Roads, was born Captain Coles's vision of the low freeboard masted turret ship.

Hitherto the discussions, as has been indicated, were within official academic naval circles. Now public opinion came into play. This was an intermediate stage between the careful "privileged" civilian support enjoyed by Sir William Symonds and the newspaper-driven agitations of the ensuing century. The public opinion which was harnessed to the turret-ship idea was civilian, influential, prosperous and *bourgeois*, and was aroused by the distribution of the captain's pamphlets which had been for the most part given in lecture form at the Royal United Service Institution. It was assisted in a measure by shipbuilding interests. Laird of Birkenhead, for instance, pressed on the acceptance of the plans for the ill-fated *Captain*. It is worth noting that this decade saw the firm establishment of Sir William Armstrong's works at Elswick and Sir Joseph Whitworth's plant at Openshaw. Such great influences, not without a weighty personal backing, were now brought to bear upon the Navy.

At the same time there remained many factors from an earlier epoch which were also exemplified in Cowper Coles's career. He was the son of a clergyman of means who owned Ditcham Park near Petersfield and his sister had married a neighbouring landowner, Captain Geoffrey Phipps Hornby of Littlegreen, who belonged to one of the greatest of the nineteenth century naval dynasties. The Hornbys were likewise rich and clerical in origin for Geoffrey Hornby's grandfather had been placed by his brother-in-law the twelfth Earl of Derby in the most valuable of the Stanley livings. Geoffrey's father, Sir Phipps, had been a midshipman in the *Victory* at Trafalgar and later commander-in-chief in the Pacific. His brother, Dr. Hornby, was to be the celebrated headmaster and provost of Eton, a parallel in naval and civilian distinction which suggests that between Admiral Sir William Fisher and his brother the warden of New College. The Hornbys went forward; the Derbys were with them still.

It was this family grouping that stood behind Cowper Coles. When Lord Derby's administration was falling Sir Phipps's services as a member of the Board of Admiralty were recognised by the advancement of young Geoffrey Hornby to post rank at the age of twenty-seven. He had paid the penalty; for five years, including the

whole of the Crimean war, he had been left ashore on half-pay without appointment. Then Derby had come back again and all was well. He was now flag captain to Sydney Colpoys Dacres in the Channel fleet. Sir Phipps Hornby was still living, a very deaf old admiral sitting in his chair at Littlegreen alongside the stuffed alligator and under the full dress of a Fiji chief, while out in the paddock stood the white mule which had drawn his dead wife's chair in Valparaiso. It gives a sense of timing thus to fill in this domestic detail against the oil lamps of the 'sixties.

Captain Coles was permitted after various attempts to design a sea-going masted turret ship which was to be built by Messrs. Laird. It was a great concession and an unwise one. The ship's low free-board of 8 ft. 6 in. was in practice reduced to 6 ft. 8 in. The *Captain* was commissioned by a cousin of the Hornbys, Captain Hugh Talbot Burgoyne, V.C., an able youthful officer. She had certain features which would recur, tripod masts and a hurricane deck that ran above her turrets which were both placed upon the centre line. She had only half the bunker space that her designer planned for her. The *Captain* was the first twin-screw battleship and the first British man-of-war to be engined by her builders.

Nevertheless the Admiralty insisted that she should not rely on steam alone. It was this decision, in which Captain Coles concurred, that brought about the great catastrophe. Her masts were high, and the very extensive sail plan was erected with the light hurricane deck, which formed the superstructure, as its base. In consequence the centre of wind pressure was raised by quite ten feet. Shrouds were abolished altogether as her designer was intent on avoiding any interference with the fire of the turret guns. This led to the fitting of the iron tubular tripod masts in regard to which Admiral Ballard makes decisive comment. "A mast," he writes,<sup>1</sup> "so reinforced has at all times a double lateral support wherever the wind may come from. That adds to the safety of the mast itself in a proportionate degree, but thereby reduces the safety of the ship which is possibly the reason why tripods were never adopted in any merchant service. It is at least certain that tripods removed her (the *Captain's*) last insurance."

As a trifling point to indicate the development of the sail plan it may be noted that the *Captain* alone among British naval vessels carried main topmast stunsails. It is well known how she foundered,

<sup>1</sup> *Mariner's Mirror*, vol. xvii, p. 286.

capsizing in a heavy sea on her third voyage. Steam was up but the engine was not in use. She had no chance to roll her masts out. It was a very dark night in the Bay of Biscay in September, 1870. Out of a ship's company of four hundred and ninety, only the gunner and seventeen men survived, reaching the Spanish coast in the launch which was on the hurricane deck with the pinnace and captain's galley stowed inside her. Captain Burgoyne was lost as were Captain Coles, who was on board as a visitor, and Hugh Childers, a midshipman, the son of the first Lord of the Admiralty. The ship's loss took place one week after the great Prussian victory at Sedan. The *Captain* lies in four thousand feet of water twenty miles to the westward of Cape Finisterre. It was a journey from hypothesis through experiment to disaster.

It seems remarkable that the introduction of armour and effective steam power did not result in an opening of the range at which it was considered that actions would be fought. In fact the development of the iron ram produced before men's minds the idea of the *mêlée*. Two accidents, the ramming of the *Vanguard* by the *Iron Duke* off the Kish lightship in 1875 and that of the *Grosser Kurfürst* by the *König Wilhelm* in the English Channel three years later, enforced the destructive effect of this new weapon. In the first instance a rent twenty-five feet square was made in the ship's side at the point where the athwartship bulkhead separated the engine and boiler rooms. Such a consequence stood out in sharp contrast to the results of collisions between sailing vessels.

The idea of in-fighting by capital ships was also maintained in other quarters. Vice-Admiral Colomb points out<sup>1</sup> in his life of Sir Astley Cooper Key that the latter "assumed, and in another place he defined the assumption, that there would be close action in future naval battles." The superiority of the smooth bore over the rifled gun in such circumstances was one of the reasons for its long continuance.

At no other point in naval history have the changes in material come so rapidly and in such confusion. In 1865 the great bulk of the guns mounted afloat were borne in truck carriages. This was "a stout wooden<sup>2</sup> carriage on four wooden wheels controlled only on recoil, in firing, by a stout rope called a 'breeching' which ran through a ring cast in the breech of the gun and secured to rings in

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Astley Cooper Key*, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

the ship's side." Although Nelson's Hardy had invented a carronade slide to assist the training of the lighter guns, the Navy was indeed in respect to gunnery only just emerging from the state of the Trafalgar fleets. The cost of naval ordnance still figured in the Army estimates and the War Office controlled all expenditure on gunnery. There was as yet no department of ordnance and no staff at the Admiralty.

Given this situation it was inevitable that the dislike of machinery for working guns should have been deeply rooted in naval opinion. Simultaneously with the development of turrets along the centre line there still remained a school of thought whose memory held to the guns of the old sailing fleets which could cast loose and move along the deck from port to port. Many years later Captain Montagu Burrows, then Chichele Professor at All Souls, would speak of the perfection of the old-fashioned gunnery at the bombardment of Acre in 1840.

Other ideas were transitory and characteristic of this time of change. Thus Captain Key expressed himself as opposed to equipping large vessels with a protected pilot house, the germ of the later conning tower. "The captain," he is found writing as late as 1866,<sup>1</sup> "would certainly be exposed to rifle fire, and should be afforded the protection of a rifle screen of  $\frac{3}{8}$ " iron in various positions from any of which he could handle the ship." One is left with the impression of the ships charging ahead, and of the closeness of those smoke-laden actions which were envisaged but never fought. A final dictum of Captain Key's illustrates the current view upon another subject. "An efficient fire brigade acting independently of the quarters would obviate all danger of a ship being set on fire by the enemy's shell." There was here no hint of twisted charred destruction.

Very slowly the successive types of ironclad were disentangled. Coaling stations would provide the answer to the problem of maintaining an adequate supply of the new fuel. The short breech-loader would be stabilised as the ship's main armament and steel would replace iron in ship construction. For the present the sail and steam of the Channel and Mediterranean fleets had something of the element of coast defence. Sailing ships still set out for distant seas.

It was not that wood was essential for fine sailing qualities. Among merchant ships the famous *Cutty Sark* was composite-built,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 373.

iron frames and teak, and the 'seventies were to see the last perfection of the iron clipper. Still in 1870 only three out of the fifty-nine unarmoured frigates and corvettes in the Royal Navy had any iron-work in their main structure. Admiral Ballard has remarked in his detailed survey of the Navy of this period that only three of these unarmoured vessels, the *Inconstant*, *Volage* and *Active* could steam faster than they could sail. "No vessel," he explains,<sup>1</sup> "of the British cruiser classes in 1870 could have escaped from a contemporary iron-hulled battleship, unless in a gale with sea room for scudding down wind, and even then her chance would have been none of the best."

The twin-screw, for vessels so fitted were inevitably dull sailers, and armour would drive out sail power; but there were still some fifteen years to run before bare pole masts would be in fashion. A note for the use of captains sent out<sup>2</sup> by Rear-Admiral Hornby, when he took command of the flying squadron in 1869, will set the tone. "Coals are to be economically used, not only when steaming, but for condensing and cooking. To ensure the thorough burning of ashes, it is advisable to make the stokers get up their own ashes when steaming quietly. When wearing in succession the driver is never to be set or the after yards braced up, until the last ship of the column be abaft the weather-beam."

We have a wealth of detail about the day to day naval life, as opposed to the high policy, of the eighteen-seventies. The smaller ships, corvettes and sloops, were seldom seen in a home anchorage. "Once clear of harbour<sup>3</sup> with sail set and trimmed, their propellers came up and their funnels came down, while commonly enough anchors were lashed and cables unbent in preparation for ten or twelve weeks out of soundings."

It is from this period that Admiral Bridge in his memoirs recalls running down the north-east Trades on the way from Madeira to Havana with his captain wearing a well-made frock-coat and velvet collar at sea in a storm. The China station, now freed from piracy, was just developing. The main landing place at Hong Kong was at Pedder's Wharf and the jinricksha had not been introduced on to the island. The *Espiègle* in 1875 was the last man-of-war to beat up as far as Garden Island in Sydney harbour. This was the final generation of the old sailing admirals and we can pause for a note upon

<sup>1</sup> *Mariner's Mirror*, vol. xix, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Sir Geoffrey Hornby*, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, *Mariner's Mirror*. vol. xix, p. 265

their last example. Lord Gilford, later Lord Clanwilliam, was born in 1832. He was only nine years older than Lord Fisher and Sir A. K. Wilson; but what firths lay between.

Richard fourth Earl of Clanwilliam had deliberately avoided the new world of mechanical propulsion. He was a tall officer, hawk-nosed and dark bearded, suffering severely from a wound in the left arm caused by a gingal bullet at Canton. He had served as a Sea Lord without contentment. "His character," Admiral Penrose Fitzgerald has asserted,<sup>1</sup> "was too independent and perhaps too peremptory to sit at a Board and argue, and then act merely as a member of a committee." He was now in 1880 commander-in-chief of the detached squadron and equally determined against passages under steam. One slight episode recalls, before the coming of the machine age, the frame of mind of Nelson.

Lord Clanwilliam was taken ill while his flagship the *Inconstant* was under sail in the belt of calms near the equator in the Pacific. "If I die," he declared<sup>2</sup> in maintaining his refusal to raise steam for they wished to get him into cooler latitudes, "Lord Charles Scott (captain of the *Bacchante*) will take command of the squadron. But not while I live." His service as commander-in-chief of the North American and West Indies station marked the end of the old Navy "boxhauling about at<sup>3</sup> sea for the purpose of teaching the officers and crews all the intricacies of a branch of seamanship which was almost moribund." In 1885 there was still yellow fever in Jamaica, which would have led to quarantine (a new conception) in every other island. At Barbados the washerwomen for the fleet were still called Mrs. Pasley, Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Keppel after those famous admirals. At Port Royal there was<sup>4</sup> "a dockyard that cost Heaven knows what to keep up which might have been of use in the days of Admiral Benbow." Here we come to a last act.

In this period, which is covered so fully in the memoirs of naval officers, we also find again the literary traces of the lower deck. The books are well groomed and introduced. Two deal with those who joined the service in 1874 and 1875, the staid recollections of a gunnery instructor, Mr. Patrick Riley, and the singularly unconvincing volume entitled *Sam Noble AB, an autobiography*.

Both these compilations, and especially the first, give certain

<sup>1</sup> *Memories of the Sea*, by Admiral Penrose Fitzgerald, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> *From Sail to Steam*, by Admiral Penrose Fitzgerald, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> *Reminiscences of Admiral Montagu*, p. 105.



details. Riley was born at Plymouth, the son of the foreman to the contractor employed on building the fort upon Drake's Island. All his childhood centred on the waterside and he joined the Navy at Devonport, adding two years to his real age. As a second-class boy he received 6d. a day. He was in the *Amethyst* which supported the *Shah* in her action with the insurgent Peruvian turret ship *Huascar* in 1877. His book, which is clearly irreproachable, has three forewords by flag officers, the first by Admiral A. K. Bickford.

The other study is curious; a profitable haze envelops it. Some points stand out, the description of the *Euphrates* troopship steaming out of Portsmouth harbour on her voyage to Bombay, the clipper bows with the figurehead of the Star of India, the white-painted hull with its broad blue ribbon, the band playing "The Girl I left behind me."

Noble himself was a Dundee lad whose friend was a cabin boy in an Anchor liner. He makes some points about his first ship the *Swallow*, a barque-rigged steam corvette bound for the naval station at Cape Coast Castle. He refers, an old man's memories, to the effect of brightness, the ship fresh from the dockyard, the milk-white canvas by Baxter Brothers of Dundee, the sunlight on the glass of the engine-room hatches, the sliding polished top of the companion, the gangway ladder with eight steps. In regard to life on shipboard almost nothing reliable is recorded. We learn that the crew of the *Swallow* objected very strongly to "foul language." The book is sentimental without simplicity.

Riley on the other hand gives a description of coaling in the 'seventies which shows how early the main lines of this evolution became fixed. The coal was hoisted three or four bags at a time by a single yard whip on each side of the deck. A fiddler sat playing on the engine-room hatch. The bags were wheeled away to the coal shutes in iron trucks.

From other sources we can build up a consistent picture. Recruitment was now regular. It was already fifteen years since Captain Hornby in taking over the command of the *Neptune* in the Mediterranean in 1861 had found in her "the last and worst of the bounty crews." The inducement of £10 bounty *per* head for an enlistment had not been in force since the French war scare of 1859. The Navy was recovering the power of attraction which had been temporarily lost to her in Crimean days. The population of the naval towns, the sons of the big crowding families of the mid-Victorian seaport.

streets, pressed into the service. The coastal areas of Cork and Kerry sent their quota through Berehaven. Henceforward until the signing of the Treaty there would always be a strong Irish element in the complements of West Country ships.

The status of the petty officer was now secure and the way opened to warrant rank. Something of the Victorian stability had come to overtake the naval life. The coastguard service was in its prime. Sir Edmund Fremantle describes his work in command of the old *Lord Warden* which, in 1877, was anchored at Queensferry with her captain in charge of an area comprising all the stations on the East coast of Scotland and in the Orkneys and Shetlands. It also included Loch Inver in the West. There was still occasionally a brush with smugglers as in the taking of the French lugger *Amèlie* laden with brandy off Loch Erriboll. Good provision for the coastguards' living quarters and educational facilities for their children were being planned. The men saw service in guard ships. "They<sup>1</sup> were fine men and good sailors, though some had got rather stout for going aloft."

To return to the general body of the service. The mess deck accommodation was improved; it was good in the corvettes and sloops and in all the ironclads after the *Invincible*. The only exception to this rule were the gunboats whose engines, boilers and bunkers occupied more than half their internal cubic space which made the berthing very tight. The routine was settling down. Every Saturday morning the decks were holystoned. The men still made every item of their uniform except their boots and hats, those black glazed and white sennit hats which were worn on Sundays in winter and summer except in wet weather.

The duty boats of a battleship of this period always included a cutter and a whaler or gig. A duty steam launch acted for the whole squadron each day, being usually provided by the ship having the guard. Shore leave was granted regularly both in home waters and in foreign ports. Smoking was still not permitted in any mess whether of officers or men. Ships' companies could smoke on deck between the topgallant forecastle and the waist gangways. Officers smoked on the half deck, those of wardroom rank on the starboard side. It was usually pipe smoking; cigarettes were confined to a few officers.

The framework of naval life was ready for the Naval Defence

<sup>1</sup> *The Navy as I Knew It*, by Admiral the Hon. Sir Edmund R. Fremantle, p. 288.

Act era. The old *Blue Posts* had been burned down in 1870. There were still crowds in the naval officers' smoking-room in the *Keppel's Head* by Portsmouth Hard. A comment made by Mr. Gladstone will serve to close this brief and packed account of the years of transition. In 1881 Lord Northbrook was introducing to the Prime Minister the commanding officer of the *Inflexible*, "our latest battleship with twenty-four inches of armour and four 80 ton guns." "Portentous weapons,"<sup>1</sup> exclaimed Mr. Gladstone, "I wonder the human mind can stand the strain of such a responsibility." The officer he thus addressed was Captain John Arbuthnot Fisher.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *An Admiral's Memories*, by Rear-Admiral Sir Sydney M. Eardley Wilmot, p. 70.

## *Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*

THE PERIOD of naval history between the bombardment of Alexandria and the impact of Sir John Fisher upon the fleet was a time of quiet development and hasty false analogy. In its earlier phases this was a time of certitudes; men felt that they had harnessed the armoured age. "Nothing," wrote<sup>1</sup> Vice-Admiral Colomb, "was certain, nothing absolute in sailing naval war. In steam war all is absolute and certain; time, supply and force, if care is taken in the comparison."

Another passage<sup>2</sup> from the same author is very telling. "The French Navy has produced many able writers on naval strategy. All describe the battles of the future as a succession of charges by the opposing ships. The ram will probably do more than the gun to decide the result." With this positiveness there went an uncertainty as to the enemy and as to the measures needed to defend the spreading and haphazard empire which had not emerged from the tranquil somnolent conceptions of the Queen's first Jubilee. An article in the *Naval Annual*, which Lord Brassey had just founded, suggests the atmosphere of those bases which Fisher would destroy.

"In its present condition," so runs<sup>3</sup> an indictment of the West Indian coaling station, "an enemy's ironclad fleet, with long-range guns, could lie off the eastern arm of Kingston Harbour, and shell that town, together with the naval establishment at Port Royal, without any defence being possible, as the carriages of the guns (10-inch muzzle-loaders) only admit of elevation up to seven degrees, and this would only cover a range of two and a quarter miles." More interesting is an appreciation of Hong Kong since we can trace the foundations of the modern China station.

The writer begins his survey by declaring that the anchorage at Hong Kong and the town of Victoria are absolutely secure so long as both passages, the Lye-ee-Moon Pass and the Lammas Channel, are sealed effectively. It is then pointed out that the Lye-ee-Moon Pass is commanded by a battery of 6-inch steel breechloading guns, and that there are batteries near the gasworks, upon Green Island and at

<sup>1</sup> *Naval Warfare*, by Vice-Admiral P. H. Colomb, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 130. <sup>3</sup> *Naval Annual*, 1888-9, p. 703.

Belden's Point. The Lammas Channel, which is four miles broad, is described as less easily defended. "Fortunately, however, there are many shoal spots in it, and upon these an intricate system of mine-fields has been laid by the Royal Engineers." Attention is once more drawn to the fire of the batteries. One can imagine that out in the murk of the China Sea there lay the new torpedo boats.

Details are given of the docks upon Kowloon Peninsula which had a depth of twenty-nine feet and a length of between three and five hundred. Mention is made of the powerful redoubts thrown up on Hong Kong Island at the time of the war scare with Russia. It seems almost incongruous to refer to the pines planted by Sir John Pope Hennessy and to the azalea-covered slopes of the Happy Valley. The force of eight hundred Sikh police, constantly recruited from India, is alluded to with satisfaction. "On the whole," the survey concludes, "we are inclined to think that Hong Kong is the best defended coaling station we possess."

In home waters there was greater movement. The staff college at Greenwich had been established in 1873 largely as a result of the efforts of Sir Astley Cooper Key who was to succeed Sir Geoffrey Hornby as first Sea Lord. The latter had raised an interesting constitutional point in regard to the use of the weapon of resignation by the service members of the Board of Admiralty in the event of the government of the day disregarding the collective naval judgment. In itself this marks a stage at which inquiry was no longer made into the particular political opinions of the Board's naval personnel. In 1876 Sir Geoffrey Hornby, coming to the conclusion that Beauchamp Seymour, Sir Astley Cooper Key and he himself were the only possible candidates for the post of first Sea Lord, endeavoured to arrange a pledge by which these three officers would undertake not to accept the appointment except on the assurance that certain reforms would be put in hand. In the event Cooper Key refused to give the undertaking; but the episode shows the way in which service opinion was then moving.

There was at this time a considerable divergence of outlook between the different naval generations. Thus Cooper Key, as also his successor, Sir Arthur Hood, was still persuaded that actions would be fought at close ranges. It was the comparatively junior ranks which felt the impact of the new ideas. Sir William Armstrong's long steel breach-loaders had by now become the staple armament; the energy of the projectile, and consequently its penetrating power,

was rapidly increasing; it was not difficult to discern the future power of gunnery.

To counter the menace of attack by the new torpedo, one hundred Nordenfelt anti-torpedo boat machine-guns had been purchased and placed in British warships. The idea of the destroyer had been mooted as early as 1884 when a design for a vessel to accompany fleets to protect them against attack by torpedo boats was ordered to be prepared. It was specified that the maximum draught was to be eight feet, so that the "destroyer" should not herself be subject to attack by the Whitehead torpedo.

Subsidies for liners to be taken up by the Admiralty as armed merchant cruisers were now introduced and the problem of the commerce raider took on those forms which it would retain in the years between the coming of full steam power and the introduction of wireless telegraphy. It was a period when the private yards developed a crucial importance in naval shipbuilding. This was the time of our last confident relationship with Germany; the island of Heligoland was ceded in 1890.

A popular interest in the fleet was stirring and W. T. Stead's articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* began to appear in the autumn of 1884. Mr. Arthur J. Marder in his study of *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, stresses, perhaps overstresses the connection between public disquiet at the limited character of the naval building programme and periods of major industrial depression. Together with Stead's activities, there now appeared Lord Charles Beresford's propaganda for a stronger Navy maintained in Parliament between his spells of active service. By 1889 the conception of the two-power standard was emerging and it is found reflected in the Naval Defence Act of that year. Mr. Marder has drawn attention to the fact that this extensive programme benefited the iron and steel trades now meeting for the first time with serious German competition.

Lord George Hamilton crystallised the doctrine of the two-power standard in a speech in December, 1893, which turned on "the self-evident proposition that our fleet should be equal to the combination of the next two strongest navies in Europe." This was five years before the Spanish-American war and one year before the battle of the Yalu which attracted attention to the navy of Japan.

That recurrent element of bitter complaint against the politicians for not strengthening the Navy now appeared. This was at its height in the months before Lord Northbrook, then at the head

of the Admiralty, consented to revise and strengthen his programme.

Popular disquiet was focused by a most inept set of verses which the Poet Laureate sent to the *Times* on 22nd April, 1885. Lord Tennyson apostrophised Lord Northbrook on St. George's Day in these terms :

You, you who had the ordering of the Fleet,  
If you have only compass'd her disgrace,  
When all men starve, the wild mob's million feet  
Will kick you from your place—  
But then—too late, too late.

The insistence on this particular threat to the nation's life formed an element in the constant doctrines of that great flag officer who was so soon to dominate the naval scene. Captain J. A. Fisher was promoted rear-admiral in 1890. "It is," he wrote, "not invasion we have to fear if our Navy is beaten, it is starvation."

It is very remarkable that an interval of only nine years difference in age should have separated Sir John Fisher and Sir Percy Scott from Lord Clanwilliam and Sir George Tryon, for a faculty for absorbing fresh points of view when long past middle life makes it almost impossible to associate the first Sea Lord in the 1914-18 war with the admiral who "boxhailed about the sea" in the detached squadron. The time is not yet ripe for any final judgment on Admiral Lord Fisher, but certain factors emerge beyond all controversy. His nature was essentially dramatic; his mind if not his methods had a great simplicity; a flaming patriotism conceived as inseparable from his own achievement drove his vast energy. He was, perhaps, essentially solitary, a worker and a phrase maker. He was the most untypical of naval officers with the engines of his purpose turning in a private world.

Without means, without influence, devoid of any interest in sport, he was borne forward by his unclogged talent. His romanticism recalls a "success story." A comment that he made<sup>1</sup> in regard to his marriage to Frances Cecilia Delves-Broughton bears this out. "She married a 'boy' lieutenant who was penniless and friendless, with the blood of the Plantagenets in her veins, and she left him with a coronet and covered with the flag of admiral of the fleet at her death."

Certain traits survive from his early manhood. He wore for sixty

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Admiral Lord Fisher*, by Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, i, p. 24.

years the studs with the motto "loyal au mort" formerly worn by Charles Shadwell of the *Highflyer*, his second captain. At thirty<sup>1</sup> he was writing of his studies. "I feel my want of French and German the more I think of it, and I almost despair of ever learning them." An Evangelical conviction of sin was present in his 'twenties, and Jeremy Taylor was among his reading. It is a strange picture of his early days, going to sermons, going to dances, *La Berceuse* his favourite valse. In time he would come to the deep study of the Old Testament and Nelson.

Mr. J. L. Garvin has described the total effect which Fisher made on him. "In short he was the genius incarnate of technical change." And Mr. Hallam Moorhouse indicates:<sup>2</sup> "There was a gleam beneath his utmost vision . . . a smile that lurked in those extraordinary eyes." It was in the eighteen-eighties that the panther attributes were first apparent. "He had,"<sup>3</sup> wrote Captain Bingham of Fisher at a rather later period, "such a terrific face and jaw rather like a tiger, and he prowled around with the steady rhythm and tread of a panther. The quarter-deck (of the *Renown*) shook and all hands shook with it."

It was at this time that his independence grew on him. Admiral Bacon has an observation<sup>4</sup> on Captain Fisher in 1881, the year in which he ceased to be a flag captain. "In future he was always to be either captain of his own ship or admiral of his own fleet." He never held, he had not perhaps the temper for holding subordinate flag rank at sea. He was Admiral-Superintendent of Portsmouth Dockyard, Controller and third Sea Lord, commander-in-chief in North America and in the Mediterranean. Back at the Admiralty again in 1902 in the second Sea Lord's place, he was promoted two years later to first Sea Lord and began his crowning work. His way was starred with sayings and it is worth quoting some to show his mind before we examine briefly his great achievement. By a fortunate chance it is possible to date them:

1873 "But be in earnest, terribly in earnest."

1899 "Moderation in war is imbecility."

1900 "Favouritism is the secret of efficiency."

1901 "Never forget from the very nature of sea fighting that an initial naval disaster is irretrievable, irreparable, eternal. N.B. You can't shoot an Allied admiral."

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, i, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, i, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, i, p. 241.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, i, p. 72.



Sir John Fisher possessed the qualities of a great creator of fleets. There was that in him which responded to each new perspective. "Oil fuel will absolutely revolutionise naval strategy." He had the capacity of the major prophet to use each instrument. It would seem that he was less ruthless than he supposed, but he was surely just as unforgiving. His vision of his service to the Royal Navy burned him up. He would speak of Arnold White's "Belshazzar words." He denounced Balfour's refusal "to go the *totus porcus*." His mind worked swiftly as he paced up and down the smooth and gravelled paths at Admiralty House, Valetta. The ideas came to him serried and galloping like the hoof beats of Assyrian chargers, and then he had his royal side.

In 1882 when he was captain of the *Inflexible* that battleship had been sent to act as guard ship in Villefranche harbour while Queen Victoria was at Mentone. In the same year Fisher had paid his first visit to Marienbad and a friendship had developed with the Prince of Wales. Nelson's veneration for his sovereign could not exceed the intimate romantic reverence which now flowered so improbably. We are, perhaps, too close to the period to appreciate that world of Sandringham and Carlsbad in which the two contemporaries were so united. After the death of Edward VII, Lord Fisher would always call him "our late Blessed Master." He had, too, other private friends, Mr. Charles Schwab of Bethlehem Steel and Mr. Joseph Vavasour of Armstrong Whitworth's, who bequeathed to his son Kilverstone Hall.

There were defined stages in Fisher's career, the riding zeal, the mastering quick intention, the apocalyptic sky. He never gained that sophistication which can armour a man against flattery. It is doubtful whether all the links with Mr. Stead were good for him. "I pointed out<sup>1</sup> to him (Stead) my *métier* was that of the mole. Trace me by upheavals." And again: "I feel like<sup>2</sup> an elephant's trunk, one minute picking up a pin and the next rooting up an oak."

Offensive and defensive weapons, the former much predominant, were the main theme of his thought. He was fearless, and unrevising. In Admiral Bradford's biography of Sir A. K. Wilson there occurs a quotation from Fisher which has much interest. It dates from the period of his command in the Mediterranean. He is speaking of the danger from torpedoes.<sup>3</sup> "The fleet must stop at night and the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, i, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> *Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. K. Wilson*, by Admiral Sir Edward E. Bradford, p. 163.

battleships with their nets out form a 'laager,' inside which must be collected the cruisers and other vessels unprovided with torpedo and net defence. When a sufficiency of destroyers is provided this arrangement may be altered." A swift humour and a touch of ridicule alike underlie this appeal for reinforcements for the fleet.

Fisher's earlier achievements had included the long successful struggle with the War Office which had resulted in the transfer of the control of naval guns from the army to the Admiralty, and the contest which had led to the adoption of water tube boilers in the fleet. He had his share, more in inspiration than in detail, in the new developments in gunnery and as second Sea Lord he had launched the scheme of entry under which executive, engineer and marine officers were all to be trained together from the age of twelve in the new shore colleges at Osborne and Dartmouth which would replace the old *Britannia*. A point should be made in connection with this last project. The naval and civilian members of the Board of Admiralty were unanimously favourable. It was from naval opinion among retired and serving officers that opposition developed; to Fisher such opposition would always seem as meaningless as it was incalculable. In the event the Marines refused to come within the scheme, and the R.N. College at Osborne only lasted some twenty years. Still Fisher was the father of the training of the modern naval officer. His taste approved Aston Webb's great building with a length like the Escorial, which crushes down the Dartmouth hillside. "Herkomer," he remarked,<sup>1</sup> "is such a real genius." Lord Fisher loved the careful paint, the cut and polished stone.

Already he had the characteristic of gathering followers around him. It was from 1904 that there dates his saying, "The five best brains in the Navy below the rank of admiral: Jackson, Jellicoe, Bacon, Madden, Wilfred Henderson." In considering the general plan of Fisher's life two points are ineffaceable, the zest for modernity and the feeling for speed. It was the former quality that led him to declare,<sup>2</sup> "Wireless is the pith and marrow of war," and again as far back as 1904, "the submarine is the coming type of war vessel for sea fighting."

Before Admiral Fisher lay the world of the old Navy, the sport, the leisurely cruising, the idea of "showing the flag," the whole conception of Lord Salisbury's foreign policy in quiet, considered, undramatic action. For lack of speed he doomed that age-long

<sup>1</sup> Bacon, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 152.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, ii, p. 144.

picture. Halifax, Esquimaux, Trincomalee, Jamaica; this is the roll of the dockyards that he closed. "An Act of Parliament,"<sup>1</sup> he was to write to Mr. Churchill, in reference to the Naval Defence Act, "made us build twenty cruisers that had only forty-eight hours' coal supply. Can I ever forget that?"

He introduced the all big-gun turbine-driven battleship with the *Dreadnought* which was commissioned in the winter of 1906. It was a time when experts were digesting the lessons of the defeat of Rodjestvensky by Togo in the Straits of Tsushima. A quotation from Admiral Sir Reginald Custance is apposite. "The main object in battle," he wrote<sup>2</sup> in lectures delivered at the Portsmouth Naval War course and printed in 1912, "is to make the enemy believe that he is beaten, the most effective way to do this is to disable his *personnel* and silence his guns. The above results (at Tsushima) seem to indicate that the smaller gun is by no means to be neglected as an instrument for this purpose." But Fisher had no use for the mixed armaments of the *Edward VII* type of battleship; he fought to kill. He has a responsibility for the battle cruisers with their sacrifice of armour to armament and speed. He had in fact a weakness for all marine monsters like the *Swift* which was twice the displacement of earlier torpedo-boat destroyers.

Always he would express himself in that mounting superlative which was so eminently unconvincing. "What you want," he was to write<sup>3</sup> to Mr. Churchill in 1912, "is the super-*Swift*—all out and don't fiddle about with armour. There is only one defence and that is speed, for all small vessels. The super-*Lion*, the super-*Swift*, the super-submarine, all else is wasted money." The mention of the *Lion* indicates how Fisher went on urging the battle cruiser form in all its weakness; like a piston he would ram home his doctrine. "No armour for anything but the super-*Lion* and then restricted. Increased surface speed is above all a necessity."

The other facets of his work as first Sea Lord are perhaps subordinate to this conception, the plan for nucleus crews for the reserve fleets, the redistribution of the fleets to meet the German naval menace, the arrangements for protecting the commerce of the seas. In his later life the Baltic called him. In 1914 he spoke<sup>4</sup> of "landing ninety miles from Berlin in that fourteen miles of sandy

<sup>1</sup> *The World Crisis*, by Winston Spencer Churchill, i, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ship of the Line in Battle*, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> *The World Crisis*, i, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Bacon, op. cit., ii, p. 146.

beach in Pomerania." Still it is for the great fleets that he created that Lord Fisher will be remembered, for their preparation and completion, not for their use. The apocalyptic mood still drove him. "We are the<sup>1</sup> lost ten tribes of Israel. We can't go under." In retirement and decorated with a peerage he was determined in conjunction with the first Lord, Mr. Churchill, to choose the commander-in-chief for the coming conflict. "October, 1914," he declared,<sup>2</sup> "which is the date of the battle of Armageddon."

In 1910 he had retired, and after the loyal collaboration he had received from Lords Selborne and Cawdor and Mr. Reginald McKenna, he could act as the elder statesman. In certain ways he was akin to the Japanese and he had something of the quality of the *Gen-ro*. Well over seventy he sat in the study in his Norfolk home with that chained pent-up energy. He would watch the wild swans flying over Kilverstone and through the window he could see out in the garden the figurehead of the old *Calcutta*. Two final quotations are revealing. About Sir John Jellicoe, whom he had chosen, he wrote<sup>3</sup> that "he has all the attributes of Nelson and his age." The last phrase has all the character of his easy clarion. "The vital British policy<sup>4</sup> that the coasts of the enemy are the frontiers of England."

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, ii, p. 129.

## The German Wars

THE FIRST German war, which brought Lord Fisher back as first Sea Lord for seven months, implemented a threat which had been growing for some fifteen years. It is worth recalling the main dates in the development of this naval rivalry. The Kiel Canal had been opened in 1895; Kiaochau had been leased as a naval base in the Far East in 1897; the first German Navy Law was enacted in 1898. The second Navy Law with the huge long-term expenditure envisaged was passed two years later. Rear-Admiral von Tirpitz was secretary of the *Reichsmarineamt*. A passage from this officer's memorandum<sup>1</sup> composed in 1894 breathes the spirit of the new German sea power. "National world commerce, world industry, and to a certain extent fishery on the high seas, world intercourse and colonies are impossible without a fleet capable of taking the offensive." This is not a doctrine to which Prince Bismarck would have been ready to subscribe. A significant factor in the situation was the Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1902 with its very immediate naval bearing.

In England opinion was only gradually acclimatised to these new facts and it was perhaps the signature of the Entente Cordiale which at last really brought the danger home. In the years between the launching of the *Dreadnought* and the outbreak of war in 1914 there was certainly a more sustained public concern for naval matters than in any period of peace before or since. In some respects the scene was almost pastoral. The brassy elements in late Victorian imperialism were now out of fashion, and the English families of these prosperous years yielded to a more tranquil self-assertion. This mood was satisfied by Newbolt's verses, "Drake's Drum" and "Admirals All." As a footnote it is, perhaps, worth recalling that the lines in Kipling's story, "The Black Sheep," became much more familiar to an Edwardian childhood than earlier and more genuine naval ballads.

<sup>2</sup>Our vanship was the *Asja*,  
The *Albion* and the *Genoa*,  
And next came on the lovely *Rose*,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Mr. E. L. Woodward's detailed study, *Great Britain and the German Navy*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in introduction, *Naval Songs and Ballads*, p. cx.

The *Philomel* her fireship closed,  
And the little *Brisk* was sore exposed  
That day at Navarino.

The end of the century witnessed the closing period of the supremacy of the evolutions which had become the test of a ship's smartness after masts and yards had disappeared. It was a brief stage of maximum attention both to coaling records and to brass work. Soon there were to come those fifteen years of gunnery advance which preceded 1914. Save for the hurricane wrack of Fisher's passage, this was to prove a peaceful era full of purpose and energy. Lord Chatfield well describes the buoyancy with which technical change went forward, an atmosphere so likely to be met with in a Navy which is at once spurred to effort and untested by war. "There was,"<sup>1</sup> we read in *The Navy and Defence*, "a surge towards modern technical appliances and modern technique which swept like a great wave over the Navy, and speeded progress along a new road. Old wood was cut away, new growth appeared, helped by Sir John Fisher and Captain Scott and that rising force, the young, technically trained gunnery and torpedo officers. What had been almost the heresy of gunnery and torpedo was slowly changed to a new religion which became, consequently, the basis of advancement." It is an interesting statement and worth pondering.

These were the years of the dominance of Sir A. K. Wilson and of Sir Henry Jackson's work for wireless telegraphy. They saw the development of the submarine and the first aircraft, the invention of director-firing and the new range-finders. Invention followed invention while the British and German fleets were precipitated towards their first great struggle. One other point should not be forgotten. The limits of this study have not permitted space to deal with naval exploration; but it is essential to recall the great effect on English life of the last voyage and death of Captain R. F. Scott. It was the peace-time offering of the heroic quality. With this preamble we can make a few comments on the two wars.

In the present state of our information in regard to the naval events of the second German War it seems best to confine this chapter to a fleeting impression of certain similarities and contrasts between the conflicts which began in 1914 and 1939. It had been anticipated in various quarters that the construction of the *Dreadnought* in 1906

<sup>1</sup> *The Navy and Defence*, by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, p. 30.

which made the so-called "pre-*Dreadnought*" battleships obsolete before their time, would endanger the naval superiority of Great Britain. In fact the outbreak of the first German war found the British fleet with twenty modern battleships and nine battle cruisers. At Jutland the opposing fleets included twenty-eight British and sixteen German battleships. On the other hand the Washington and London Treaties had produced a situation in which the Royal Navy had no recently constructed battleships in commission at the outbreak of the second conflict. Nevertheless the rate of destruction of German capital ships was much lower in the earlier struggle. There was nothing in the war of 1914-18 to parallel the admirably planned and executed actions which led to the destruction of the *Graf Spee* and *Scharnhorst*.

Both engagements have an especial interest. Sir Henry Harwood's victory in which the three British ships were individually much inferior to the enemy stands out as a classic. Sir Bruce Fraser's destruction of the *Scharnhorst* shows the first effective use of the destroyer in attack upon a battleship, a menace which had for so long overhung the naval scene. It was also a triumph of new methods of range-finding and location. Both actions appear to have been models of a driving and elastic co-ordination.

The earlier war is inseparably linked with the theory and practice of the Grand Fleet, a vast assemblage of strong units in a tradition which goes back to Keppel's days. Its history was that of a blockade, singularly strangling and ultimately effective, and of a single battle. At Jutland there converged from British ports five squadrons of battleships and three of battle cruisers, besides armoured and light cruisers, and a great destroyer screen. Sir John Jellicoe was supported by Vice-Admirals Beatty, Burney, Sturdee and Jerram, Rear-Admirals Evan-Thomas, Duff, Leveson, Hood, Arbuthnot, Heath, Pakenham, Brock and Napier, and Commodores Goodenough, Alexander Sinclair and Le Mesurier. It reads like the roll of Howe's grand fleet on the Glorious first of June.

It is not intended to traverse the history of the battle. Two points should, perhaps, be made. A German admiral bent on the swift and determined extrication of the High Seas fleet, a course from which he never wavered, was faced by a British commander-in-chief who had the greatest knowledge of his material, an unexampled care for the men under his command, and a determination that no course of action should endanger that massed British fleet which alone stood

between his country and invasion and was the sole instrument of the great blockade. With so many weapons in their experimental stage, the submarine and the destroyer not yet fully tested, Sir John Jellicoe possessed a burdened dry appreciation of each possible development. No optimism would come to dilute the final judgments of his calm and clear and deeply generous mind.

This complex battle, into which neither submarine nor aircraft really entered, may probably be taken as the last two-dimensional naval action between the entire massed fleets of rival powers. Its inconclusive character is in fact in keeping with so many of the fleet encounters in the long history of naval warfare. The future will reveal how air power may come to modify the old conceptions.

The Jutland controversy as to the parts played in that action by Admirals Jellicoe and Beatty has had certain effects. Sir David Beatty left no memoirs and made no contribution to this literature. No biography of this admiral has yet been written. Although commander-in-chief of the Grand Fleet, he was denied that great sea battle which alone could adequately test the powers which lay beneath his ardent leadership. His predecessor has, however, been the subject of a mass of writing in part autobiographical. It seems likely that an appreciation of the *character* of Sir John Jellicoe will long survive, the self-command and that high dedicated care, the long and noble life which recalls Collingwood.

Two consequences of the Jutland battle were very serious, the discovery of the very limited penetrating power of the British projectile and the liability of British ships to be destroyed by a fire in the magazine. The effect of plunging shells striking the turret roofs at extreme ranges had not been sufficiently considered.

In this connection the weakness of the battle cruiser type is striking. The name would seem to have gone for ever, but it is remarkable how many of those great ships lie shattered on the sea floor. Once the first battle cruisers with their crowded superstructure and that constricted silhouette were left behind, the type suggested force and their lines were often beautiful. The *Invincible*, *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary* lie on the sea bed to the northward of Horns Reef; the *Hood* at the southern end of Denmark Strait; the *Repulse* in the South China Sea. Nor have the light battle cruisers ordered by Lord Fisher with a view to Baltic operations had better fortune. "The *Furious*," he wrote,<sup>1</sup> "(and all her breed) were not built for salvoes.

<sup>1</sup> *Records*, p. 201.



They were built for Berlin, and that's why they drew so little water and were built so fragile." Mr. Churchill has described these ships as "an old man's children," and certainly they link the wars. The *Courageous* and *Glorious* were to go down as aircraft carriers in the second conflict. Together all these vessels resume a whole closed chapter of naval history, the swiftness and the armament, the fine bows and the seas streaming past the great length of the fragile hull. It is this last adjective which is surely the operative word. Lord Fisher called for an Isaiah to proclaim his vision. "There is only one defence and that is speed."<sup>1</sup>

It seems likely that it is the small ship work of the 1914-18 war that will remain in naval memory, Sir Roger Keyes' attack with the *Vindictive* upon the Mole at Zeebrugge, the work of Tyrwhitt's and Goodenough's light cruisers, that first *mêlée* off Heligoland, the destroyers in the Jutland battle. The presence of the Grand Fleet, Scapa and its long winter afternoons serve to focus attention upon the Q ships and Gordon Campbell, the exploits of Evans of the *Broke*, the submarines penetrating to the Sea of Marmora.

Both German wars have in common the countering of the submarine menace although the first has nothing to compare with the perils of the Arctic and Mediterranean convoys. The second conflict has been fought in the most severe conditions in the high latitudes. In the war of 1914-18 aircraft were used for purposes of reconnaissance and this idea was primarily responsible for the cruiser-borne aircraft whose rôle has been so much out-distanced by that of fighters and bombers borne in aircraft and escort carriers. The finding, shadowing and sinking of the *Bismarck* was an operation which was wholly novel, the first case where the air element was used to help to compass the destruction of a great battleship. This victory on its naval side was Sir John Tovey's high achievement.

It seems generally accurate to suggest that the torpedo has proved the more dangerous weapon in air attack on naval vessels. Certainly torpedoes were used with great effect against the Italian battleships at Taranto and by the Japanese against the *Prince of Wales*. The experience of the 1914-18 war, and notably that of the *Marlborough* at Jutland, tended to give a confidence in the power of armour to withstand the torpedo, a confidence which has not persisted.

Sustained anti-aircraft fire is a new factor. The passage of the

<sup>1</sup> *World Crisis*, i, p. 140.

*Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* up the Channel from Brest to their German ports will reveal lessons. The question of the operational range of land-based or carrier-borne aircraft introduces a novel element. This is the first war in which "air cover" has acquired a meaning.

The destroyer, too, has come into her own. The Russian convoys with their escorts and their battleship support have given a validity to the expression "fleet destroyers." Captain Sherbrooke's action in December, 1942, is a very fine example of their handling. The work of British submarines has gained a new offensive character of which we cannot yet fill in the details. Night fighting for large surface craft is once more accepted as sound in doctrine after the hesitations of the Jutland era. Few victories have approached the perfection in timing and method which marked Sir Andrew Cunningham's destruction of the Italian cruisers at night off Cape Matapan without suffering a casualty.

Superficially the second German war seems to reveal very perfect successes and deep miscalculations. The loss of the *Cressy*, *Hogue* and *Aboukir*, an early success for submarine warfare in September, 1914, is a standing warning. Future students will be enabled to investigate the loss of the *Gloucester* and *Fiji*, the circumstances which surround Sir Tom Phillips' last voyage as commander-in-chief of the Eastern fleet, the detail of the battle of the Java Sea.

Both wars have had their single ship encounters. In each war there has been a case where the two combatants have gone down together, the duel between the *Alcantara* and the *Greif* and that between the *Sydney* and the *Kormoran*. The second case is unusual since it involved the sinking of a cruiser by a converted commerce raider. The *Sydney* disappeared without survivors and this was the fate of several vessels in the earlier war. Certainly it was quickly understood that there would be much heavier casualties in ironclad and steel ships than in the days of the sailing navy.

Before making a brief comment on the naval *personnel* it is necessary to introduce a note on the inter-war years, one of the most difficult periods of naval history. The documents which would permit a judgment on the various building programmes and on the rôle of successive first Sea Lords are not yet available. It is sufficient to say that the effect of the Treaty limitations on new tonnage were everywhere apparent. During these years there took place the mutiny at Invergordon. The effect in the sphere of foreign politics, coming in the winter of 1931, was obviously far-reaching. It seems safe to

affirm that the men of the Home Fleet had never considered such a consequence. They were concerned with what appeared to them as a domestic breach of good faith by the political administration. Possibly at the root of the whole matter there will be found to lie a radical failure of the imagination on the part of the Board of Admiralty.

During this period the more distant foreign stations lost their earlier quality. The decision not to renew the alliance with Japan jeopardised the position of the China squadron. Only the United States could maintain a Pacific fleet strong enough to deal with a first-class Asiatic naval power. The name of Sir William Fisher is indissolubly linked with the Mediterranean station at this time. He was perhaps the greatest of that generation of flag officers who held their final commands in those twenty years of peace.

For various reasons the public interest in the service was at a low ebb between the wars. The panacea of universal disarmament operated with one section of the people, and the menace and future of the Air Arm with another. Besides, since the German building programme for the second conflict could only be carried out over a short space of years, there was no obvious enemy with a large and increasing fleet for the raucous cheerful English "fear" to feed upon.

The historical interest in the Navy, which had been so prominent a feature of the period of the Trafalgar centenary, was at this time less in evidence. Sir Julian Corbett, the last of the early school of modern naval historians, died in 1922 while in the course of producing the official history of the 1914-8 war. Those naval correspondents and writers who so successfully roused the public concern had died in the early Fisher period. Sir James Thursfield and Sir William Laird Clowes are the names best remembered in this field. Sir John Knox Laughton, to whom the modern science of naval biography is really due, survived into the first German conflict. The period of the second German menace showed no school of writers parallel to that which created understanding of naval history in late Victorian and Edwardian days.

The manning of the Royal Navy during the second German war has brought into the service a fine cross-section of the nation's life. In no previous conflict have so many men from such different shore occupations joined in the maritime defence of England. The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and the "hostilities only" ratings carry a very great part of the naval burden. Much of the work of small craft,

like motor gun boats, falls wholly upon them. It is fitting that those formerly civilians should have been entrusted with so great a share of the action arising from the fact that the coasts facing England from Terschelling to Ushant were once again after a century in hostile hands. Throughout the Navy, with the main fleets and in escort duty, this element of those who have chosen their war service on the sea is always present. The old conception of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as a body recruited in the first place from the yachting and small-boat sailing population is quite outmoded. They are now the nation at war in the Royal Navy.

The history of the Royal Naval Reserve has followed a similar course in both the German wars. Its share in both has been much more equal; it is that permanent contribution made to naval warfare by all those who follow the sea as a vocation.

The active menace of invasion made 1940-1 in some ways resemble the year of the gathering of Napoleon's army in the camp before Boulogne. Certainly the life of the Navy enters more closely into the nation's consciousness than in any previous era. There is nothing of that isolation from experience of the sea which was the lot of the agricultural labourer in the Midlands throughout Napoleon's triumphs and defeats.

It seems clear that there has never been a time when the naval life in all its detail has been bound up so intimately with each family throughout Britain. The Navy has always held the first place in the English legend. All that this country has so long stood for is implicit in the defence of England on the sea.

## Glossary

It is always difficult to decide what terms to include in a glossary and these have been brought together in order to elucidate the text. The definitions are taken from *The Sailor's Word-Book*, by Admiral W. H. Smyth, and from the appendix to *Sea Kings of Britain* by Sir Geoffrey Callender.

*Abeam*.—In a line at right angles to the ship's length; opposite the centre of a ship's side.

*Argo Navis*.—The southern constellation of the Ship.

*Athwart-Hawse*.—Across the stem of another ship at anchor.

*Banian* or *Banyan Days*.—Those on which no flesh meat was issued to the messes. Stock-fish used to be served out till it was found to promote scurvy.

*Battening the Hatches*.—Securing the tarpaulins over them.

*Beam*.—The measurement of a ship at its greatest breadth.

*Bear Up, To*.—To keep farther away from the wind by putting the helm up.

*Beat to Quarters*.—The order for the drummer to summon every one to his respective station.

*Bread Room*.—The lowest and aftermost part of the orlop deck, where the biscuit was kept.

*Breeching*.—A strong rope passing through a fixture at the breech of a gun, and fastened on either hand to the side of the ship; used to keep a gun in position, to prevent it from recoiling too far and to secure it in rough weather.

*Broad Pendant*.—A swallow-tailed banner at the masthead of a man-of-war; the distinctive mark of a commodore.

*Cable Tier*.—The place in a hold, or between decks, where the cables are coiled away.

*Careen, To*.—To heave a vessel down on one side by the application of a strong purchase to her masts so that her bottom may be cleared of seaweed, barnacles, etc.

*Carronade*.—A gun for use at close quarters and mounted on the upper deck. It was first made at the Carron Ironworks near Falkirk.

*Carronade Slide*.—Composed of two wide strips of elm on which the carronade rested.

*Coamings*.—Certain raised work rather higher than the decks, about the edges of the hatch-openings of a ship, to prevent the water on deck from running down.

*Cockpit*.—The after part of the orlop; in time of battle the place where the wounded were attended to. At other times the berthing place of the elder midshipmen and of certain of the warrant officers.

*Coppered*.—Said of a ship sheathed in her under-water parts with thin sheets of copper to prevent the teredo worm from eating the planks.

*Counter*.—Loosely that part of a ship's stern immediately above the water-level.

*Entering Ports*.—Ports cut down in the middle gun deck of three deckers to serve as doorways for those going in or out of the ship.

*Fighting Instructions*.—From early times directions were issued by the Admiralty for the guidance of commanders of fleets. In 1665 James II attempted to collect the more useful of them. In 1703 they were definitely issued in a code called *The Permanent Instructions*.

*Gun-Deck*.—Properly the lowest battery-deck of a man-of-war; so called, because on this deck the heaviest ordnance was mounted.

*Gun-Room*.—The aftmost portion of the gun deck; the abode of the gunner and of the junior midshipmen who were under his charge; the storeroom for small arms.

*Jib*.—The fore topmast staysail. See *Staysail*.

*Jib-Boom*.—The spar used to lengthen the bowsprit.

*Jury Masts*.—Temporary substitutes set up in a ship disabled by shot or weather.

*Keep One's Wind, To*.—To sail as close to the wind as possible; to retain the windward berth.

*Leeward, To Leeward*.—On the sheltered side of the ship, or on the side opposite to that from which the wind is blowing.

*Luff, To*.—To bring a vessel closer to the wind; accomplished by easing the helm down.

*Mainsail*.—The lowest sail borne by the mainmast.

*Masts*.—In the sixteenth century the royal ships more often than not had four: foremast, mainmast and two mizzens. In the seventeenth century one enlarged mizzen took the place of the smaller

two. Above the lower masts came the topmasts; above the topmasts, the topgallants, and above the topgallants, the royals.

*Orlop*.—The uppermost portion of a ship's hold; floored and appointed like an ordinary deck, but accommodating storerooms, etc., instead of guns.

*Plying*.—Making way by tacking.

*Poop*.—The highest and aftermost deck of a ship, connected by stairways with the quarterdeck.

*Put a Ship About, To*.—To go on the other tack.

*Quarter*.—That part of a vessel's side from abaft the mainmast to the stern.

*Quarterdeck*.—That part of the upper deck between the break of the poop and the mainmast; the habitat of the officers.

*Rake, To*.—To sweep a vessel from stern to stem or stem to stern with broadside fire.

*Reef, To*.—To reduce sail in proportion to the increase of wind.

*Running Free*.—Sailing with the wind abaft the beam.

*Sailing Close-Hauled*.—Sailing as close to the wind as possible.

*Sailing Free, Sailing Large*.—Sailing before the wind.

*Shorten Sail, To*.—To take in sail, to reduce the area of canvas spread.

*Shrouds*.—A range of large ropes extended from the mast-head to the right and left sides of the ship to support the masts and enable them to carry sail.

*Skysails*.—Sails set immediately above the royals; fifth in order from the deck.

*Slack in Stays*.—Slow in tacking.

*Spring a Mast, To*.—A mast is said to be sprung when a flaw is discovered in it or a sudden rent or split is occasioned by carrying too great a pressure of canvas.

*Spritsail*.—A sail attached to a yard which hung under the bowsprit.

*Spritsail Topsail*.—A square sail set on a small mast erected at the bowsprit end and sheeted to the spritsail yard.

*Staysails*.—Triangular fore-and-aft sails set upon the stays; the jib being the most widely known. They were first adopted by the Royal Navy in the days of Rooke.

*Studding-Sails, Stun'sails*.—Light sails extended in moderate and steady breezes beyond the skirts of the principal sails, where they appeared as wings upon the yard-arms.

*Tack, To*.—To turn a ship's head round, against and in opposition to the direction of the wind.

*Top*.—A sort of platform surrounding the lower mast-head. It was fenced in with a rail and used to extend the topmast shrouds, as a vantage post for observation and as a battle station for small-arm parties.

*Topgallant Sails*.—The third sails above the deck.

*Topsails*.—The second sails above the deck.

*Veer, To*.—To pay out cable.

*Waist*.—That part of the main deck between the fore and main hatchways.

*Ward-Room*.—The commissioned officers' mess, situated aft of the main deck in ships of the line.

*Wear, To*.—Reverse of to tack ; to turn a ship round by going from the wind and hauling to it again gradually.

*Weather the Enemy's Line, To*.—To get to windward of the enemy, to deprive him of the weather-gage.

*Weather-Gage, Windward Position*.—In battle the position of that fleet, squadron, or ship which lay nearer to the wind than its adversary.

*Weigh, To*.—To set a ship in motion by raising the anchor.

*Windward, To Windward*.—On the side of the ship from which the wind is blowing.



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